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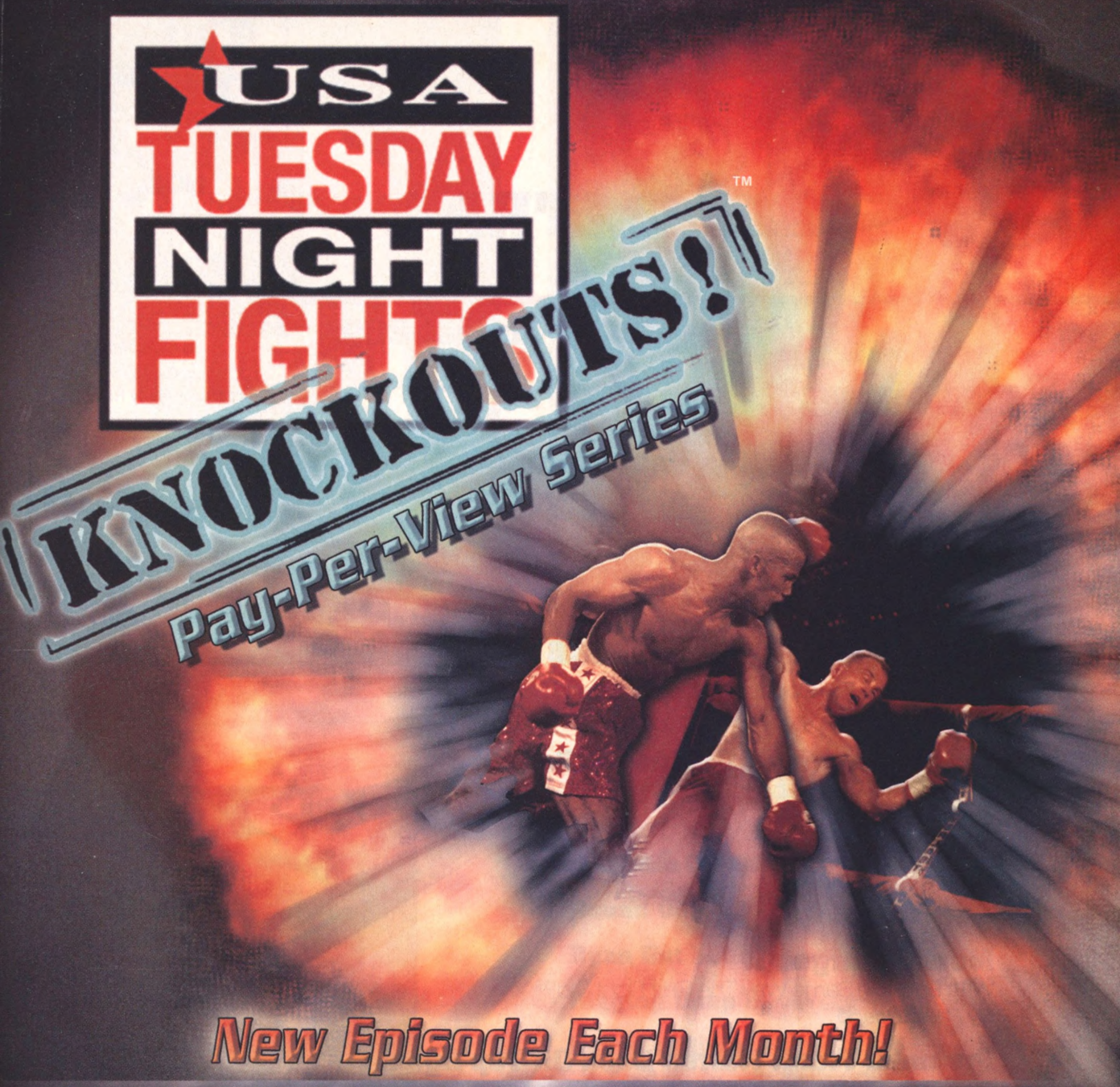

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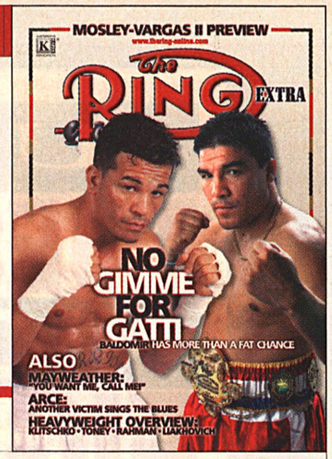
August 2006



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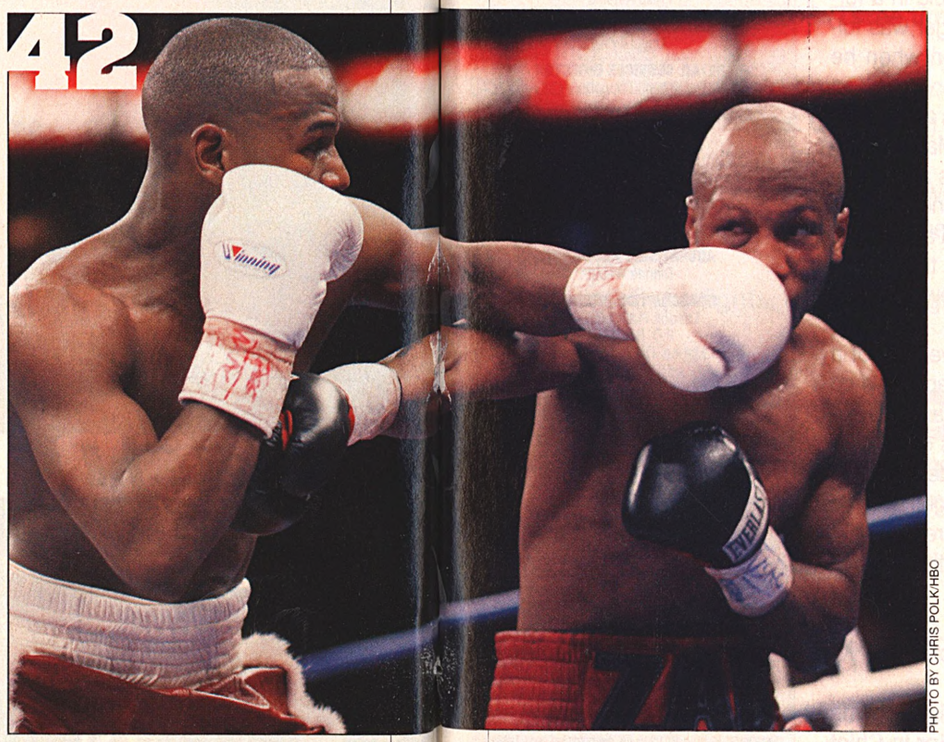

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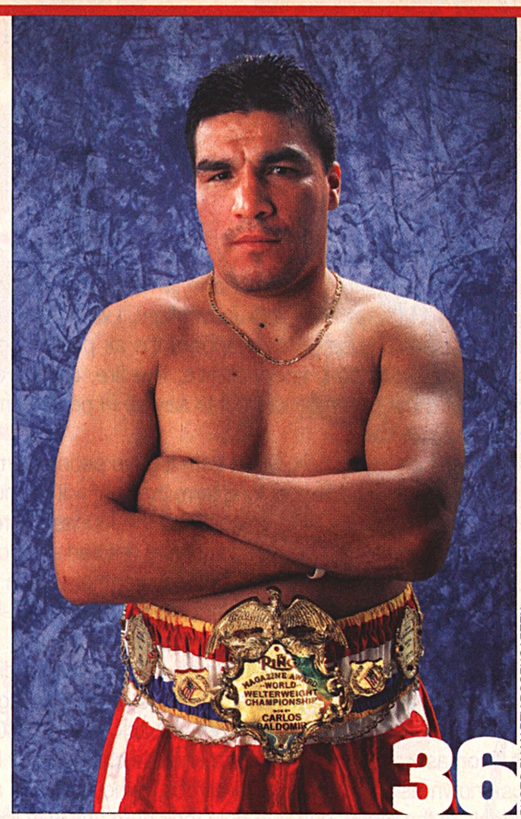

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[Ringside]

While I certainly can't condone what took place in the 10th round of the Floyd Mayweather-Zab Judah fight, I was not nearly as appalled as a lot of folks. These things happen; it's all part of boxing. Let's not kid ourselves; it's a violent sport, and violence, like fire, can spread uncontrollably. And while I know it's not politically correct to say so in polite company, the unscheduled skirmish wasn't all bad.

Nobody was seriously hurt. Short term it gave people something to talk about and boosted HBO's replay audience; long term the fight will be much more vividly recalled because of it. Even those who complained the loudest were secretly thrilled by the naked display of anarchy. They wouldn't have reacted so strongly otherwise.

From an historical perspective, the Mayweather-Judah free-for-all was nothing more than an insignificant dustup compared to the old bare-knuckle days when they had to hire guys with whips to keep the crowd out of the ring.

The police and security at the Thomas & Mack Center did a good job of keeping members of Judah and Mayweather's posses out of the ring when all hell was busting loose inside of it. It was a lot tougher back in the 1830s when "Benndigo" (as William Thomas was known) was bare-knuckle champion of England. He had a gang of thugs known as the "Nottingham Lambs," who attended all of his contests, clubs and cudgels at the ready, eager to help their hero any way they could.

Like today, it was often former or active fighters working the corner, which in those long-ago days meant offering your knee for the combatant to sit on between rounds, sponging him off with water, and pouring a bracer of strong spirits between his bloody gums. And, perhaps more importantly, act as a second would in a formal duel, protecting his man from any violation of the rules. Uncle Roger was following a tradition older than the Nevada State Athletic Commission when he rushed to his nephew's defense.

Moreover, a boxing match isn't just about who wins and who loses. It's about what is revealed in this most public unveiling of body and soul. This aspect of Mayweather-Judah was totally satisfying: We saw Judah expose himself yet again as a frontrunner who loses composure when the going gets tough. We saw the genesis of his shortcoming dash into the ring and fire the first punch of the unscheduled altercation. We saw Mayweather overcome a difficult beginning of the fight, solve the tactical problem, begin to dominate, and then, at the moment he was most grievously mistreated, rise above the fray, literally and figuratively.

It's true that Judah's double cheapshot might have deprived Mayweather of a knockout win, but it gave him an opportunity to show the world that perhaps he is no longer the spoiled brat who called his sweetheart deal with Top Rank and HBO a "slave contract," abused the mother of one of his children, and threw his own father out of the house (though that last one might have been justified, considering Floyd Senior's big mouth). By being the victim of two flagrant fouls, refusing to get involved in the melee, and initiating a touch of gloves when the action resumed, "Pretty Boy," if not exactly absolved of his former sins, was at least able to put them further in back of him than ever before.

Another black eye for boxing? I suppose that's true if you don't think any deeper than all the headline writers who dragged that one out of Cliché Hall of Fame yet again. But for me, black eyes are just part of boxing.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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The Ring

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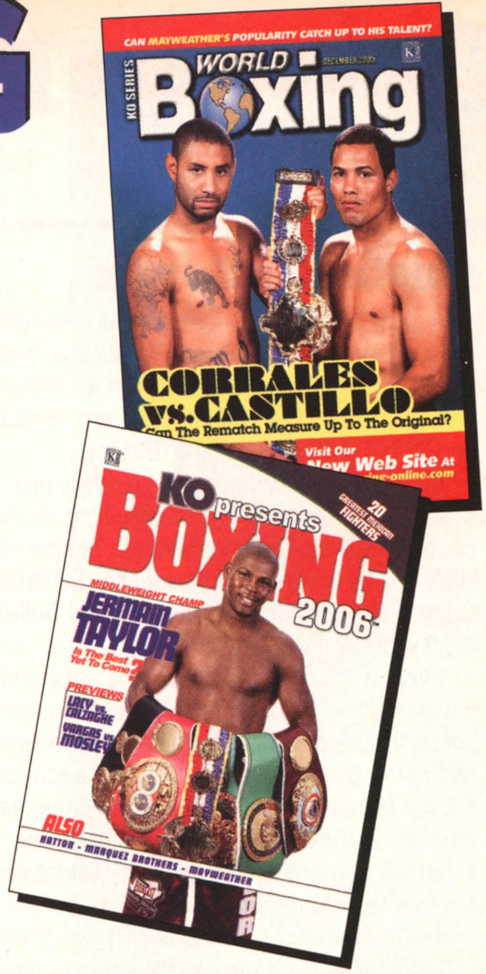

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Justice Is Served

A guilty plea in Los Angeles, California, and a conviction in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, has resulted in lengthy prison sentences for former boxers James "The Harlem Hammer" Butler and Clifford "The Black Rhino" Etienne.

Butler, 33, pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and arson in the bludgeoning death of sportswriter Sam Kellerman, the brother of HBO boxing analyst Max Kellerman. Superior Court Judge Michael Pastor sentenced Butler to 29 years, 4 months.

Etienne, 33, was convicted of a variety of charges, stemming from an August 2005 crime spree, including two counts of armed robbery, attempted carjacking, two counts of second-degree kidnapping, attempted second-degree murder, and two counts of attempted manslaughter. According to Assistant District Attorney Prem Burns, Etienne, who will be sentenced in June, faces at least 64 years in prison.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Etienne went out in the first round against Tyson

Both cases were deeply disturbing to the boxing community not only because of the violent nature of the crimes, but also because Butler and Etienne were given a second chance to turn their lives around through boxing, only to end up back behind bars.

Etienne, a former high school football star sent to prison for attempted armed robbery, had been somewhat of a poster boy for rehabilitation when he launched a successful pro career after being paroled in 1998. He was 24-1-1 (17) going into his February 2003 bout with Mike Tyson, but after suffering a first-round kayo in that fight, Etienne's career went into decline. He was 5-2-1 (3) over his next eight bouts, and was stopped by Calvin Brock and Nicolay Valuev in his final two bouts before being arrested for robbing a check cashing business, high jacking two cars, and attempting to shoot at the driver of one the cars and two pursuing policemen. The jury rejected claims that Etienne did not know what he was doing because he was high on drugs and suffering from brain injuries sustained from boxing.

Prior to being arrested for killing Kellerman, light heavyweight Butler was best known for sucker-punching opponent Richard Grant with a taped fist after losing a bout in November 2001. After serving seven months for assaulting Grant, Butler, who was diagnosed as suffering from a bipolar disorder, resumed his boxing career with only modest success, winning two of four comeback bouts.

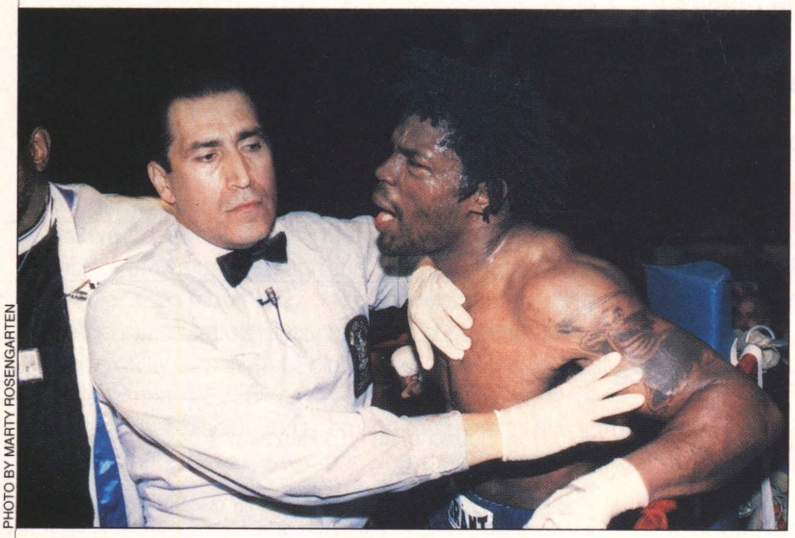


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Ref Mike Ortega restrains Butler after the assault on Grant

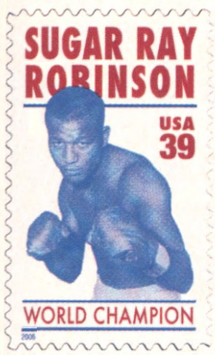
Sam Kellerman and Butler had been friends since they trained together at the Times Square Athletic Club as teenagers, and in 2004 Kellerman allowed the boxer to stay in his Hollywood apartment while Butler attempted to revive his career. In October, Kellerman's body was found in the apartment with wounds from 32 blows by a blunt instrument to his skull. A bloodstained hammer was leaning against the wall. Butler, 20-5 (12), was arrested and charged shortly afterward.

While the sad sagas of Butler and Etienne prove that boxing cannot always save the troubled souls who turn to it for salvation, we shouldn't forget that for others, such as Bernard Hopkins, it can be a viable vehicle for redemption.

Pound-For-Pound Stamp Champ

Sugar Ray Robinson has recently been admitted to one of the most exclusive clubs in the world, a club with only three other members—professional boxers who have been honored by having their likeness on a United States postage stamp.

The 39-cent Robinson stamp, which was designed by U.S. Postal Service Art Director Carl Herrman, was unveiled on April 7 at a dedication ceremony during the *Daily News* Golden Gloves finals at Madison Square Garden, and was available nationwide the next day. All told, 100 million Robinson stamps will be issued.



Prior to Robinson, Joe Louis was featured on a 29-cent stamp issued in 1993, Jack Dempsey on a 32-cent stamp in 1998, and Rocky Marciano on a 33-cent stamp in 1999.

There have been three other U.S. stamps issued with a boxing motif: a reproduction of George Bellows' famous painting "Stag Night At Sharkey's," issued in 1998, and two Olympic Games stamps, one issued in 1983, and one in 1990 (featuring Eddie Eagan, who won gold as both a light heavyweight at the 1924 Summer Games and as a member of the winning U.S. bobsled team eight years later at the Winter Games).

The U.S. Postal Services receives approximately 50,000 stamp suggestions annually, but only 20 to 25 make the cut.

"My dad was a true competitor," said Ray Robinson Jr., who was on hand at MSG for the dedication. "He would have loved those odds."

"Brown Bomber" Gone But Not Forgotten

Ray Robinson wasn't the only boxing immortal honored this spring; on April 12 his contemporary and good buddy Joe Louis was remembered on the 25th anniversary of his death with a wreath laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery.

A military honor guard joined family and friends of the former heavyweight champion as they gathered at his grave beneath the branches of an old oak tree not far from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Louis served in the Army during World War II, achieving the rank of sergeant.

"Joe Louis challenged the conscience of the country," Louis' son, Joe Louis Barrow Jr., told the gathering. "You couldn't have it both ways. You couldn't put Joe Louis on a pedestal and admire him as the heavyweight champion of the world and yet not allow him and his people to eat where they wanted to eat, live where they wanted to live, be educated where they needed to be educated."

PHOTO BY BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Joe Louis' son addresses the gathering at Arlington National Cemetery

According to cemetery superintendent John Metzler, Louis' grave continues to attract many visitors.

"It's extraordinary to me that it doesn't fade," said Barrow, who is working with filmmaker Spike Lee on a movie about his father. "I don't know why the world doesn't want to let go of this man, but I'm thankful that it doesn't."

TV Fights of the Month

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
3/17/06	Jesse Feliciano W 10 Vince Phillips	ESPN2	w	C+	C+	C+
Phillips didn't look shot necessarily, just not as energetic as Feliciano; good fight						
3/18/06	Hasim Rahman D 12 James Toney	HBO	h	A	B+	C+
Emanuel, we're still not clear on it yet; was Toney's weight the problem or what?						
3/24/06	Edison Miranda KO 7 Howard Eastman	ESPN2	m	B-	A	B-
Miranda passes major test with flying colors; the guy's a puncher						
3/31/06	Victor Ortiz KO 1 Freddy Barrera	Showtime	jw	C	B+	C
This was impressive, but let's be honest—how much longer was Barrera going to be undefeated?						
3/31/06	Anthony Thompson W 12 Darnell Boone	Showtime	m	C	B-	D-
We agree with Dr. James Jen-Kin: both guys—terrible						
3/31/06	Kevin Johnson W 8 Robert Hawkins	ESPN2	h	C-	B-	D
Won't it be fun to watch when Johnson finds out one night to his horror that a quick jab gets you only so far?						
3/31/06	Montell Griffin W 10 Norman Jones	ESPN2	lh	C	C-	C-
Griffin isn't a top light heavyweight anymore, but he'll be a pesky one until he's 50						
4/1/06	Sergei Liakhovich W 12 Lamon Brewster	Showtime	h	A	B+	B+
What did Brewster need McGirt for? He could have not listened to Jesse Reid just as easily						
4/5/06	Antwun Echols D 10 Mohammad Said	ESPN2	m	C+	B-	C+
Echols on his way down, Said maybe on his way up, meet at the right time to put on a good scrap						
4/5/06	Verno Phillips W 10 J.C. Candelo	ESPN2	jm	B	B+	B
Hey J.C., next time just give a man his money						
4/7/06	Isaac Hlatshwayo W 12 Nate Campbell	ESPN2	l	B-	B+	B-
See what happens with all these titles floating around? Even the fighters get confused at the end						
4/8/06	Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 2 Tyler Ziokowski	HBO PPV	w	C	D	D+
Hey, at this point in his career the kid's old man hadn't even fought outside Mexico yet; give Junior a break						
4/8/06	Juan Diaz W 12 Jose Cotto	HBO PPV	l	B	B	B+
Diaz a pressure fighter who can win boxing from outside, too; when was the last time you saw that?						
4/8/06	Jorge Arce KO 6 Rosendo Alvarez	HBO PPV	fl	B+	B+	C+
Who else would like to have seen this when Alvarez was four or five years younger?						
4/8/06	Floyd Mayweather W 12 Zab Judah	HBO PPV	w	A	A-	C+
Do you think if title fights were five rounds Zab would start crapping out after the second?						
4/12/06	Paul Williams KO 2 Sergio Rios	ESPN2	w	C+	C-	C
Rios outgunned from the start; Williams an excellent prospect						
4/14/06	Andre Berto KO 3 Horatio Garcia	ESPN2	w	C	C-	D+
We agree with Smokin' Joe; Berto didn't do anything great in there, either						
4/14/06	Jason Gavern W 6 Rafael Butler	ESPN2	h	C	B+	B
Now that's what we like out of two big ol' sloppy heavyweights; good for them						
4/14/06	Dominick Guinn W 10 Audley Harrison	ESPN2	h	C	B-	D+
You were expecting Foreman-Lyle?						
4/19/06	Kermit Cintron KO 10 David Estrada	ESPN2	w	B+	B+	A-
Excellent fight and good win for Cintron, but he's lucky Estrada is no puncher						
4/21/06	Rayonta Whitfield W 10 Evarista Primero	ESPN2	fl	C+	B	C+
It's early, but Whitfield looks like a solid prospect						
4/21/06	Derek Bryant KO Tauras Sykes	ESPN2	h	C	B-	C-
Someone tell Sykes it doesn't say in the rulebook he has to go down every time he gets touched on the chin						
4/22/06	Wladimir Klitschko KO 7 Chris Byrd	HBO	h	A	B-	C+
We hope we're wrong, but we get the sense Byrd's wife gave him a worse beating afterward than Klitschko did						

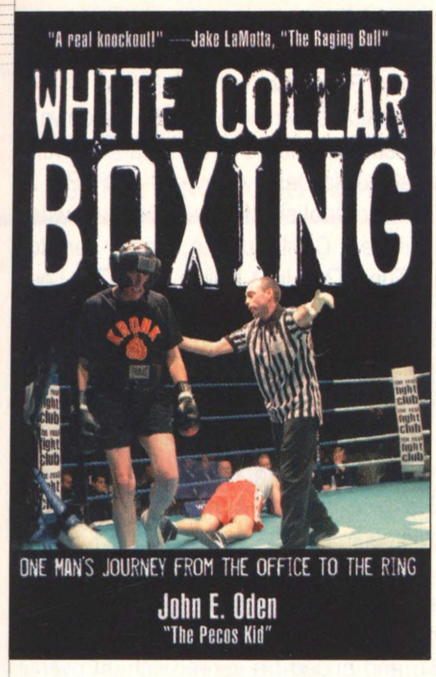
Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

Boxing Bookshelf



Aging baby-boomers who have wondered what it's like to punch somebody in the nose are finding out in growing numbers, thanks to the phenomenon called "White Collar Boxing." In the United States, New York's Gleason's Gym is the Mother Church of the movement, where paper-pushers trade their ties and wingtips for cups and 16-ounce gloves and have at one another in glorified sparring matches in which no winner is declared and the combatants each get a trophy and something to tell the grandkids.

Now comes *White Collar Boxing: One Man's Journey From The Office To The Ring* (Hatherleigh Press, $24.95, hardcover, 237 pages), whose mission, says author John E. Oden, is to tell "the story of the revolution of white collar boxing ... its status in today's busy world, and the importance it has for those of us who love it." It is seriously undermined, however, by Oden's incessant ego-tripping, name-dropping, and self-promotion. A fiftysomething Wall Street money manager and self-confessed "publicity hound," Oden calls himself "The Pecos Kid," and thinks so highly of himself that when a prospective opponent in a White Collar match in London dropped out, Oden figures it was because he "heard about me."

The preening is relentless and mind numbing. Photos and cartoons of The Pecos Kid are scattered throughout the text, and when you think it's finally over, you arrive at the first appendix and find the "Boxing Record Of John Oden," which takes up five pages and includes his comments on each of the 18 fights listed ("Didn't lay a glove on me. This was among my best nights ever as a student of the Sweet Science"; "Very close match, with a number of people surprised that the decision went against me"). Harry Greb's 292 fights took up less than three pages in the old *Ring Record Book*, and makes for more fascinating reading, even without any comments about that sonuvabitch Tunney.

—Pete Ehrmann

Barney Ross despised the movie Hollywood made about his life and even disavowed his own ghostwritten autobiography. But the legendary 1930s lightweight, junior welterweight, and welterweight champion of the world would probably have few qualms about the simply titled *Barney Ross* (Nextbook, Shocken; 216 pages, hardcover, $19.95), a compact, no-frills biography that tells his story in a straight-ahead, unsensational fashion.

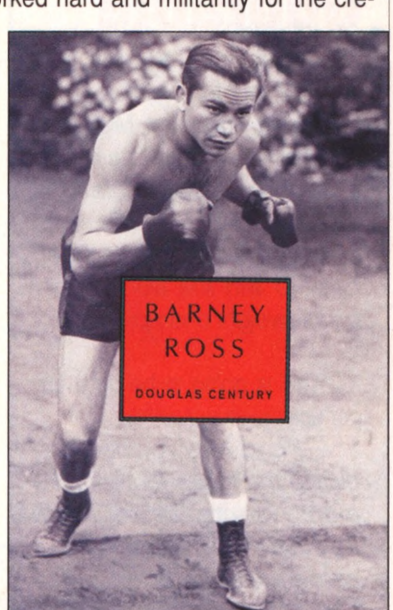
That's exactly what makes Douglas Century's book sensational. The temptation to schmaltz up the life story of one of boxing's greatest champions would be almost too much for any writer, but Century's admirable restraint makes it all the more affecting and powerful.

The man who became Barney Ross was the son of a Talmudic scholar who drummed into his children that "a devout Jew should never raise his fists—even in self-defense." When he was 13, "Runt" Rasofsky's father was killed by a robber in the family's Maxwell Street store in Chicago. Changing his name to keep his mother from finding out, Ross started boxing to get his siblings out of the orphanage to which they were sent after their father's murder.

Century does not take a fight-by-fight tour of Ross' boxing record, but that shouldn't deter hardcore fans. There is plenty of detail concerning the famous trilogy with Jimmy McLarnin and Ross' last fight, against Henry Armstrong, when Ross was fine until "suddenly, after the fourth, the horrible Dorian Gray moment: the welterweight champion ages 20 years in a matter of seconds ... The rest is a dreadful thing to watch, like hidden camera footage of a baseball bat beating."

When World War II broke out, the aimless and depressed Ross figured it was the ultimate way for him to go out. Instead, he won the Silver Star for bravery after taking out 22 Japanese soldiers over the course of 13 hellish hours in a Guadalcanal foxhole. Treatment for his injuries led to a four-year addiction to morphine that cost Ross $250,000. He committed himself to a "federal narcotics farm" because "a lot of kids think I'm a hell of a fighter. Well, I can't let 'em see me wind up as a dope fiend. I got to beat it."

He did, and later worked hard and militantly for the creation of Israel, offering to join an army of Jewish freedom fighters and even running guns for the Zionists.



Ross was no saint. He loved the nightlife and gambling ("He celebrated his third win over Ceferino Garcia" at the horse track, reports Century, "losing his entire $18,000 purse in a few hours"). But he was unquestionably a hero, in and out of the ring, and Century's biography is a winner.

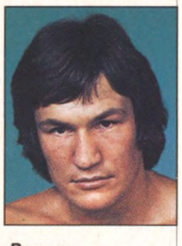
—Pete Ehrmann

Outside the Ropes

Three-time former heavyweight champion **Muhammad Ali**, 64, has sold 80 percent of the marketing rights to his name and likeness for $50-million to **CKX Inc.** Ali and his wife, **Lonnie**, are expected to work with CKX to market his interests. CKX had previously concentrated primarily on entertainment. It also holds the rights to the television show *American Idol* and **Elvis Presley**'s marketing. "This relationship with CKX will help guarantee that, for generations to come, people of all nations will understand my beliefs and my purpose," Ali said ... **Golden Boy Promotions** has signed Filipinos **Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista**, 19-0 (14), and **Z "The Dream" Gorres**, 22-1-1 (12), and will bring them to the United States to train and fight. "The hottest talent pool in the boxing world right now is the Philippines," said **Oscar De La Hoya**, president of Golden Boy promotions ... Former IBF lightweight titleholder **Paul Spadafora** was paroled from a motivational boot camp in mid-April. Previous to spending six months in the camp, Spadafora had served seven months in state prison. He was imprisoned after pleading guilty in 2004 to shooting his girlfriend, **Nadine Russo** ... Nevada Chief Deputy Attorney General **Keith Kizer** has been appointed the new executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, replacing outgoing **Marc Ratner**, who recently accepted a position with the **Ultimate Fighting Championship** organization ... In other commission news, **Brad Wright**, who helped champion boxing reform in Michigan, is being replaced as chairman of the Michigan Boxing Commission. Wright believes his removal is politically motivated and payback for "rubbing some people in Lansing (the state capital) the wrong way"... Former heavyweight champion **Vitali Klitschko** was unsuccessful in his bid to become mayor of Kiev, which also dashed his hopes of getting elected to the Ukrainian Parliament ... Welterweight journeyman **Frank Houghtalling**, 32, has been charged with participating in a family crime ring that staged minor car crashes and made false insurance claims. After being arraigned in Albany, New York, Houghtalling, 19-10-5 (4), was freed on bail ... Local welterweight **Kevin Payne**, 34, died of brain injuries on March 20, the day after winning an eight-round decision over **Ryan Maraldo** in Evansville, Indiana. Payne, 14-5-1 (6), had recently become a hometown hero after he ran down a purse-snatcher at the local Wal-Mart. He and Maraldo were fighting for the right to face Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. on HBO. A memorial fund has been established to aid Payne's wife, **Jenny**, and his two children. Contributions can be sent to: Kevin Payne Memorial Fund, One In A Million Inc., 8789 Louisiana Street, Suite B, Merrillville, Indiana 46410 ... Undefeated Australian middleweight prospect **Bassam Chammi**, 26, was shot and killed in Sidney, Australia, on March 29 ... Former WBC super welterweight titleholder **Eckhard Dagge**, 58, died of cancer at Hamburg, Germany's Leuchtfeur Hospice in early-April. Dagge won the title by stopping **Elisha Obed** in June 1976, and made two successful defenses before losing the belt to Italian **Rocky Mattioli** in August '77. He had his final bout in November '81, and ended his career with an overall record of 26-5-1 (15). After retiring, Dagge became a trainer and helped develop light heavyweight **Dariusz Michalczwski** ... Veteran referee **Davey Pearl**, 88, died in Las Vegas in late-March. Although he was 5'4" tall and weighed 124 pounds, Pearl worked approximately 70 championship fights, including **Leon Spinks'** upset of Muhammad Ali in 1978. He also refereed the **Ray Leonard-Thomas Hearns** welterweight showdown in '81. A longtime Vegas resident, Pearl hobnobbed with celebrities such as **Howard Hughes**, with whom he formed a friendship while working as a bellman at the Flamingo in the 1950s, and **Sonny Liston**, with whom Pearl used to do roadwork at the then-Sahara Country Club, near Liston's home. "Geraldine [Liston's wife] used to look to Davey to influence Sonny," said fellow Vegas referee **Toby Gibson**. "As small as Davey was, Sonny would listen to him. Davey would get right up in Sonny's face" ... Former heavyweight title challenger **Nick Barone**, 79, died in Syracuse, New York, in mid-March. Although he spent most of his career as a light heavyweight, Barone challenged heavyweight champion **Ezzard Charles** in Charles' hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio, on December 5, 1950. Barone was stopped in the 11th round, but gave Charles a surprisingly good fight. "He was one tough son of a gun," said **Don Hamilton**, a former amateur boxer and friend of Barone's. "He weighed about 175 pounds when he fought Charles, but he went toe-to-toe with him." Barone fought professionally from 1946 until 1951, compiling a record of 44-12-1 (21) ... Former U.S. Navy boxer **Charlie Ross**, 75, died in late-March at his home in Milton, Massachusetts. Since the mid-1980s, Ross wrote a weekly boxing column called "Punchlines" for Boston's *Post-Gazette*.

Ali: Sells rights to his name

Klitschko: Loses mayoral bid



Dagge: Cancer victim

Barone: Dead at age 79

Quotable

"I read Frank Warren was going to pay for a statue in my hometown. I hope not. Most people who have a statue are dead."

—Joe Calzaghe, talking about how his life has changed since beating Jeff Lacy to win the world super middleweight championship

"This is going to be ugly, super ugly."

—Floyd Mayweather, predicting the future more than a month before his bout with Zab Judah that erupted into a corner-clearing brawl in the 10th round

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended April 23, 2006

Heavyweights: Wladimir Klitschko soars from eight to number one, based on his seventh-round TKO of previous number one Chris Byrd, who drops to seventh. Sergei Liakhovich debuts at four after decisioning Lamon Brewster, who slides from fourth to fifth. Calvin Brock (seventh last issue) drops to eighth to make room for Byrd.

Cruiserweights: No changes.

Light heavyweights: No changes.

Super middleweights: Librado Andrade jumps from ninth to seventh, after beating the departing Otis Grant (seventh last issue). Chad Dawson (10th last issue) leaves for light heavyweight, making room for Mger Mkrtchian at eight and Lucian Bute at nine. Robin Reid falls from eighth to 10th based on inactivity.

Middleweights: Howard Eastman (fifth last issue) leaves after suffering a seventh-round TKO to Edison Miranda, who debuts at six. Sam Soliman moves from sixth to fifth.

Junior middleweights: Shane Mosley enters at three, after stopping Fernando Vargas (fourth last issue) and abandoning his plan to fight at welterweight. Sergei Dzindziruk, Vargas, and Ike Quartey fall one slot each, while Daniel Santos drops from sixth to eighth based on inactivity. The reshuffling shifts Javier Castillejo from eighth to ninth and Rodney Jones from ninth to 10th. Alejandro Garcia (10th last issue) departs.

Welterweights: Floyd Mayweather enters at number one after beating Zab Judah. Antonio Margarito (first last issue) drops to second in order to accommodate Mayweather's arrival. Shane Mosley (second last issue) moves to junior middleweight and Cory Spinks (fourth last issue) exits due to inactivity, advancing everyone from fourth to 10th last issue one place each. Mark Suarez debuts at 10.

Junior welterweights: The departure of Floyd Mayweather (number one last issue) to welterweight moves up everyone previously ranked from second to 10th one place each. Soulemane M'Baye enters at 10.

Lightweight: No changes.

Junior lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior featherweights: Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (sixth last issue) departs after a loss, advancing everyone from seventh to 10th one slot each. Rikiya Fukuhara debuts at 10.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: Rosendo Alvarez (seventh last issue) exits after getting stopped by Jorge Arce, moving up everyone from eighth to 10th one spot. Luis Maldonado debuts at 10.

Junior flyweights: No changes.

Strawweights: No changes.

Pound-for-pound: No changes.

The Ring
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Junior Welterweight
2. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
3. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
6. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
7. **Jose Luis Castillo**
   Junior Welterweight
8. **Antonio Tarver**
   Light Heavyweight
9. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
10. **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam**
    Flyweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended April 23, 2006

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko jumps to number one at heavyweight after kayo of Byrd

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 46-3 (41)
2. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 41-5-2 (33)
3. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-4-3 (43)
4. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-1 (14)
5. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-3 (29)
6. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-6-1 (28)
7. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 39-3-1 (20)
8. **CALVIN BROCK** Charlotte, NC 28-0 (22)
9. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 25-1 (21)
10. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 43-0 (31)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 34-1-1 (21)
2. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 23-2-1 (15)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY** Pomona, CA 42-4 (36)
4. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK** Germany 31-0 (21)
5. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 26-3 (22)
6. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-2-1 (31)
7. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 39-10-1 (20)
8. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 29-3-1 (20
9. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO** Spain 60-6 (40)
10. **RODNEY JONES** Lafayette, LA 37-3-1 (22)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 37-0-1 (20)
2. **TAKASHI KOSHIMOTO** Japan 39-1-2 (17)
3. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 44-3-1 (33)
4. **HUMBERTO SOTO** Mexico 38-5-2 (22)
5. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 30-3-1 (18)
6. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 26-1 (19)
7. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 25-2-2 (14)
8. **VICTOR POLO** Colombia 36-5-3 (26)
9. **JOAN GUZMAN** Dominican Republic 24-0 (17)
10. **SPEND ABAZI** Denmark 32-1 (10)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 39-3 (29)

1. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 46-1-1 (37)
2. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 56-4-1 (36)
3. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 24-2 (17)
4. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGYM** Thailand 24-0 (15)
5. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 27-1-1 (18)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 24-0 (15)
7. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 23-0-1 (5)
8. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 22-0 (8)
9. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 27-1 (25)
10. **RIKIYA FUKUHARA** Japan 18-1-1(14)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 35-3 (31)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 20-2 (7)
3. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 32-4 (28)
4. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 50-3-2 (35)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 19-1 (15)
6. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 34-4 (20)
7. **CRUZ CARVAJAL** Mexico 25-13-1 (21)
8. **RICARDO VARGAS** Mexico 39-11-3 (13)
9. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 65-9 (42)
10. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 18-0-1 (6)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: O'NEIL BELL
Atlanta, GA 26-1-1 (24)

1. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 33-3-2 (26)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 19-0 (10)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 31-3 (21)
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
England 45-12-2 (29)
5. **CARL THOMPSON**
England 34-6 (25)
6. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-2 (17)
7. **DALE BROWN**
Canada 35-4-1 (22)
8. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 34-2 (16)
9. **DAVID HAYE**
England 16-1 (16)
10. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 35-1 (26)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ANTONIO TARVER
Orlando, FL 24-3 (18)

1. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 44-10-2 (29)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 23-0 (14)
3. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-4 (38)
4. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 38-3-1 (23)
5. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
France 47-2 (31)
6. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 30-0 (21)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 39-3 (23)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 24-2 (18)
9. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 26-2 (13)
10. **ERIC HARDING**
West Hartford, CT 23-3-1 (7)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 41-0 (31)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 37-0 (28)
2. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-2 (13)
3. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 25-3 (20)
4. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 21-2 (19)
5. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 21-1 (17)
6. **MANNY SIACA**
Puerto Rico 20-5 (18)
7. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 23-0 (17)
8. **MGER MKRTCHIAN**
Aremenia 23-2 (17)
9. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 16-0 (15)
10. **ROBIN REID**
England 38-5-1 (27)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 25-0 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 50-3 (25)
2. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 46-4-1 (32)
3. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 20-0 (17)
4. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 25-1 (11)
5. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 32-8 (13)
6. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 26-0 (23)
7. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 21-1 (9)
8. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-2 (13)
9. **SCOTT DANN**
England 24-2 (17)
10. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 27-0 (24)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: CARLOS BALDOMIR
Argentina 42-9-6 (12)

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 36-0 (24)
2. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 33-4 (24)
3. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-4 (25)
4. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 26-1 (12)
5. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 40-7 (31)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 26-1 (24)
7. **JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA**
Worcester, MA 37-4-1(24)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 36-3 (11)
9. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
Denmark 37-1 (27)
10. **MARK SUAREZ**
Riverside, CA 25-2 (13)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 40-0 (30)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 26-0 (22)
2. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
Australia 31-2 (25)
3. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 54-7-1 (47)
4. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 33-1-2 (19)
5. **CARLOS MAUSSA**
Colombia 19-3 (16)
6. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 26-2-1 (17)
7. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 31-4-1 (17)
8. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 40-8-1 (26)
9. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
Vero Beach, FL 39-3-1 (18)
10. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 33-1 (18)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: DIEGO CORRALES
Las Vegas, NV 40-3 (33)

1. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 32-3-1 (20)
2. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 36-3-1 (27)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 29-0 (14)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 32-3 (24)
5. **ACELINO FREITAS**
Brazil 37-1 (32)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-1 (16)
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-3 (29)
8. **ISAAC HLATSHWAYO**
South Africa 24-0 (9)
9. **LAVKA SIM**
Mongolia 21-4-1 (18)
10. **RICKY QUILES**
Puerto Rico 39-6-3 (8)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 41-3-2 (32)
2. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 61-4 (42)
3. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-4 (34)
4. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 23-1-1 (12)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 46-3-1 (37)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 45-2-1 (32)
7. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
Bellflower, CA 41-6-1 (24)
8. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 22-1 (17)
9. **ROBBIE PEDEN**
Australia 25-3 (14)
10. **JANOS NAGY**
Hungary 23-0 (14)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 30-1 (16)
2. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 32-3-1 (8)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 23-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 32-1-1 (24)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-2 (26)
6. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 29-4 (19)
7. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
South Africa 28-3 (18)
8. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 23-2 (10)
9. **GERRY PENALOSA**
Philippines 49-5-2 (33)
10. **MBWANA MATUMLA**
Tanzania 15-1 (9)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 60-2 (31)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 27-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 25-0 (20)
4. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 44-3-1 (34)
5. **IRENE PACHECO**
Colombia 30-1 (23)
6. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 19-0-2 (13)
7. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 19-1 (7)
8. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 24-3-1 (10)
9. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 38-14-3 (22)
10. **LUIS MALDONADO**
Mexico 33-0-1 (25)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 21-1 (17)
2. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 22-3-1 (16)
3. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 22-2-2 (13)
4. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 21-1 (16)
5. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-0 (12)
6. **WILL GRIGSBY**
St. Paul, MN 18-4-1 (11)
7. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 33-4-1 (20)
8. **NABUAKI MASUDA**
Japan 21-3 (3)
9. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 22-5 (12)
10. **MUVHUSO NEDZANNI**
South Africa 14-1-3 (9)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 25-0 (5)
2. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 20-1-3 (8)
3. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 50-7-4 (22)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 15-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 15-2 (7)
6. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 19-3-1 (16)
7. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 14-2-1 (10)
8. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 35-4-1 (30)
9. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 22-0 (17)
10. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-8-3 (13)

By Jeff Ryan

If I Were A Commish Man

The golden-haired genie emerged without warning from a beer bottle resting in the gutter outside Gleason's Gym and, as is to be expected when these sorts of things happen, she granted me three wishes. No sooner did I tell her I'd like to play center field for the Yankees and get 162 postgame massages from Eva Longoria during the course of the season, than the bottle blonde cut me off before I could spit out my third request.

"No," she told me. "I mean three *boxing* wishes."

Oh, okay. In that case, let me go with 1) returning Muhammad Ali to perfect health, 2) putting together a Floyd Mayweather-Aaron Pryor dream fight, and 3) making me the de facto commissioner of the entire sport. That's right, little old me running things, making changes, fixing problems, and answering to no one. Talk about a dream job.

So what, specifically, would I do in that capacity? Funny you should ask ...

•Junk the 10-point must scoring system: In reality, it's a three-point must system because almost every round without a knockdown is scored 10-9, those featuring a knockdown are marked 10-8, and it requires two or three knockdowns to ever see a 10-7. Judges wouldn't award a 10-6 or 10-5 round if the winner of it brings a nuclear weapon into the ring and vaporizes his rival.

Let's go back to the rounds system with a *supplemental* point system to break any ties. And if that still fails to break a tie? *Hmmm.* Maybe ...

•Create an overtime round: The scorecards would obviously have to be totaled quickly, but it wouldn't be a tragedy if there was a three-minute rest period between the final bell and the overtime round. If the bout was still even after round 13, it would be a draw.

•Recognize only The Ring world champions: Wait a second, Ryan, isn't it self-serving for a columnist to tout his own magazine like that? Not at all. The Ring's Championship Policy has its flaws, and if another publication or TV network came up with something that made more sense, it would have my endorsement. So far, though, I haven't yet seen a different system, let alone a better one.

•Utilize instant replay: Technology should be advanced enough that the referee or a specific ringside official could view a replay between rounds, determine if a cut was caused by a butt or whether or not a fighter's knee touched the canvas, and report his findings to the judges. Replay can even be relied on to reveal if a fighter went down from a blow or merely slipped on the beer logo painted on the canvas.

Of course, that last scenario wouldn't even be necessary to contemplate if The Commish decided to simply ...

•Outlaw logos painted on the canvas: Boxing ought to do what tennis sometimes does and use a computer graphic that gives the illusion an ad is on the

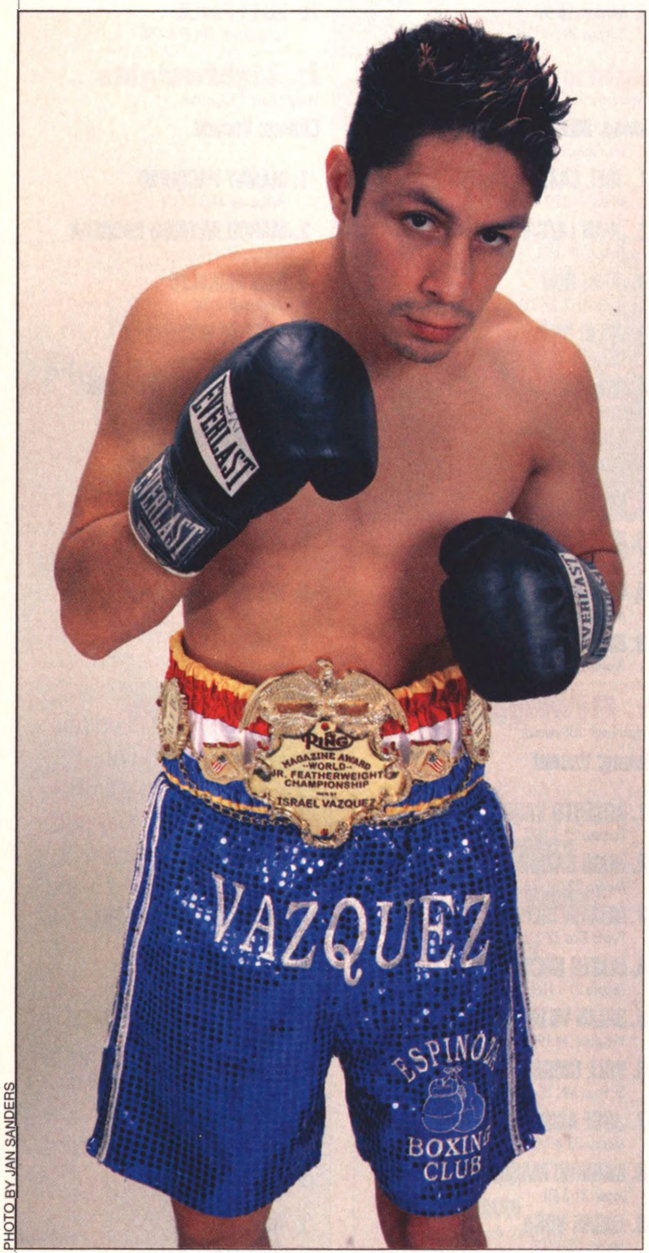


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Commissioner Ryan likes Vazquez' belt but not his division

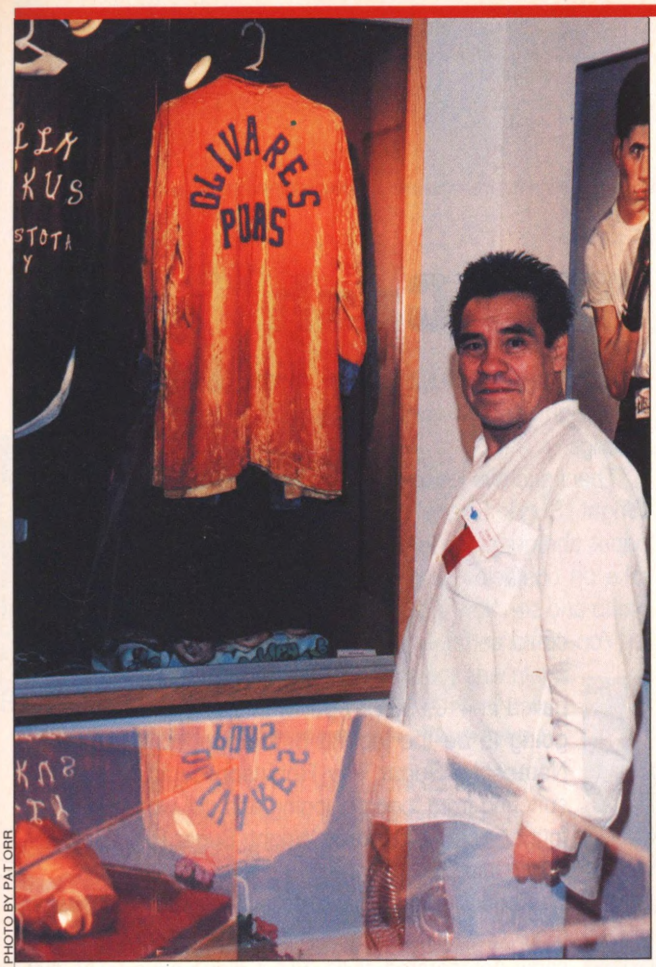


PHOTO BY PAT ORR

The International Boxing Hall of Fame should stick to guys like Olivares

playing surface. If that's not possible, then—are you sitting for this?—make do with one less sponsor.

•Make the three-knockdown rule standard: That's right, it would be a part of every bout from four-rounders and six-rounders to world title fights and dustups in the concession stand line. If the Kentucky Derby is "the most exciting two minutes in sports," then the most spine-tingling 30 seconds have to be when a guy has been floored twice, he's reeling from turnbuckle to turnbuckle, and we don't know if he's going to survive that half-minute to the bell or hit the floor once more and go home a loser.

The three-knockdown rule is particularly appealing to me because it favors the underdog, giving him a chance (however great or miniscule) to catch a slow-starting favorite early and blast him out before he has an opportunity to get rolling.

•Eliminate some weight classes: No, we don't have to go back to just the original eight divisions, but cruiserweight, junior featherweight, and strawweight are out. For those anxious to lecture me about the torture of having to sweat off weight or the danger of moving up more than three or four pounds at a time, I say go tell it to Henry Armstrong and Sugar Ray Robinson.

If O'Neil Bell doesn't like my plan, he can fight as a heavyweight or get another job. If Israel Vazquez objects, well, let him shed four pounds and compete at bantamweight. And if Yutaka Niida has a problem with it, he can go to McDonald's, order a Big Mac, supersize his fries and soda, and remake himself from a strawweight into a junior flyweight before he even has a chance to burp.

•Save the Kronk Gym: It's an institution, and any fan nutty enough to object to a one dollar surcharge on his ticket ought to be sent to one.

•Punish the steroid abusers: This isn't baseball, where the first offense warrants denying the guilty party an extra sparerib from the clubhouse spread and the musclehead isn't banished for good until his shoulders are as wide as the Dodger Stadium scoreboard and his back sports more acne than the entire guest list at a junior prom. My policy is simple, easy to understand, and not subject to any challenge from a players union.

Here it is: Fail *one* test for performance enhancing drugs, and you never fight again. What's that? Yeah, you're right, it is virtually impossible to know if a pug who's been given a career death sentence actually competed in a four-rounder in Bozeman, Montana, last weekend. All right, then instead bar him from HBO, Showtime, ESPN, Telefutura, Univision, Fox Sports Net, and pay-per-view. That ban would be easier to enforce and, let's face it, if you can't be seen on any of those TV outlets, your career is as good as finished.

•Make Mt. Canastota a tougher climb: That means scrapping the requirement that a minimum amount of candidates be elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame every year. If nobody makes it in a given year, so be it. The Hall is supposed to honor only the true greats of the game, not every guy who can draw a big, cash-waving crowd to the induction weekend festivities.

•Establish reasonable pay-per-view prices: Over are the days of paying $44.95 to watch Mayweather against an opponent (Zab Judah) who lost in his previous outing. Hell, if Mayweather-Judah is worth that kind of cash, or Bernard Hopkins-Oscar De La Hoya warrants a $54.95 price tag, what would Ali-Frazier I, Louis-Schmeling II, or Zale-Graziano III cost nowadays?

•Introduce throwback apparel night: If the NBA can pull out the short shorts or Major League Baseball can retrofit the fellas in flannel for a couple of fan-friendly nights every season, then boxing should join the craze. Two heavyweights in replicas of the trunks Ali and Frazier wore in Madison Square Garden on March 8, 1971, would look cool, no?

•Give reality television a new twist: For instance, sometime early in the year, fans would get to vote for which matchup they'd most like to see, no matter the weight class. The winning superfight would be signed and sealed within a month, the competitors would have plenty of time to train or take tune-ups, and the showdown would unfold on either CBS, NBC, or ABC in prime time during November Sweeps.

Allow me to cast my vote now: Mayweather-Ricky Hatton.

See, having me as the commissioner of boxing might actually straighten out this game. Next month, we'll talk about my salary, and my vacation time, and my per diem, and my mileage allowance, and … ■

By Ivan Goldman

Mosley Goes For The Cash

When Sugar Shane Mosley boarded the big-money express to give a rematch to junior middleweight Fernando Vargas, it was like watching a fine poet give up his art to write sitcoms, a great chef hiring on as a fry cook, Miles Davis playing elevator music.

Okay, maybe it's not all that bad, but against the game but deteriorated Vargas, Mosley could win five straight and still not do much to improve his standing in boxing history, something he used to care about a lot. Ironically, he'd be taking a much bigger risk stepping down seven pounds to compete in the tough welterweight division, which is where his body belongs.

Thanks to two losses apiece to Vernon Forrest and Winky Wright, Sugar Shane's career looks like it went through a paper shredder. He knows the best way to shore it up is to take on obstacles like Floyd Mayweather and Antonio Margarito and see how the cards fall.

You could certainly argue that his choice to fight Vargas again was the smart one because, hey, their first bout pulled in 410,000 pay-per-view buys, and he's never going to be the legend he'd hoped to be anyway. Namesake Sugar Ray Robinson could have been suffering from food poisoning and still won four out of four against Forrest and Wright. Sugar Ray Leonard? Same thing.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Sugar Shane stays at junior middle for the money

As for Vargas, these days he retains a following more because of his charisma and attitude than his sadly deteriorated skills. But it didn't have to be that way. I've always believed his career took a tragic turn because he played against a marked deck in a crucial game. Allow me to take you back to the night of December 2, 2000, at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas.

Down twice in the first round against super-hitter Felix Trinidad, prodigy Vargas, still a few days shy of his 23rd birthday, somehow managed to come back in round four to nail Tito with a sweet left hook that sent him straight to the canvas. When Trinidad got to his feet, he was as wobbly as a drunk in a windstorm. Referee Jay Nady let him continue, but the odds were steeply against his making it through the round.

Trinidad didn't exactly fool anyone when he threw an intentional low blow to gain time while Vargas tried to recover from the foul. Sure, Nady took a point. Big deal. Vargas never recovered—not really, and Trinidad tore him up so viciously over the next eight rounds that some of us feared for Vargas' life. Apparently, these fears weren't shared by Nady, Vargas' corner, or the Nevada commission, but finally, in round 12, when Vargas went down three more times, Nady, much, much too late, waved it off.

It's been argued that Vargas was no less guilty than his opponent because he also turned dirty and was penalized himself for a low blow later, as was Trinidad. Yes, the fight turned into an out-of-control foul-fest. But the law recognizes the concept of exten-

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Vargas has absorbed much punishment in just 29 pro bouts

uating circumstances, which Vargas faced that night.

No fighter should lose a contest because his opponent fouled him. That fight is one of the principal reasons I pay so much attention to officiating in this column. "El Feroz," who'd boasted a tremendous amateur record and had outstanding boxing skills, was never again the same fighter. He earned piles of money, but he was robbed of his destiny. Was it really surprising years later when he tested positive for steroids? An athlete who loses to a cheat is likely to become one himself.

Vargas is a personable young man with plenty of admirable qualities. I interviewed him at length after he won the IBF junior middleweight title from Yory Boy Campas in 1998 at the age of 21, and I'll never forget his exuberance. The kid slept with his new belt. But even if he was a jerk, he'd still deserve a fair shake in the ring—something he didn't get the night of December 2, 2000.

MAGOO 1: Patricia Jarman's score of 86-85 for Vargas over Mosley was made possible by her giving the first round to Vargas, which was like scoring World War II for Japan and Germany. Nine fans out of 10 would know Vargas gave away the round. The 10th would have been drinking since lunch. I don't mean to say that Jarman drank her lunch, but her score was out to lunch. You're being watched, Jarman. Shape up.

MAGOO 2: To the fans already booing Mark Johnson and Jhonny Gonzalez in the first round of the co-feature preceding Mosley-Vargas. Fighters are entitled to a feeling-out round before they pull out the heavy stuff. If they decide to jump into a Hagler-Hearns war at the opening bell, great, but boxing etiquette requires us to forgive them when they don't. The situation is similar to what referee Marty Denkin once told me about the tendency of fighters to clinch after doing several hard rounds. "They earned the right to clinch," Denkin said.

MAGOO 3: On behalf of all the West Coast fans who got screwed, I'm obligated to point out that HBO's Jim Lampley, during the early rounds of the Miguel Cotto-Gianluca Branco contest, revealed the results of Showtime's Joe Calzaghe-Jeff Lacy bout. Left Coasters were poised to see it on tape delay later that night. When we heard Lampley's casually uttered disclosure, we got mugged. He ruined the experience of watching Calzaghe put on one of the greatest boxing performances since Willy Pep retired.

I don't know how many West Coast fans banged their heads against the coffee table in rage and frustration over Lampley's goof, but let me tell you, the next day a lot of us were walking around with purple welts on our foreheads.

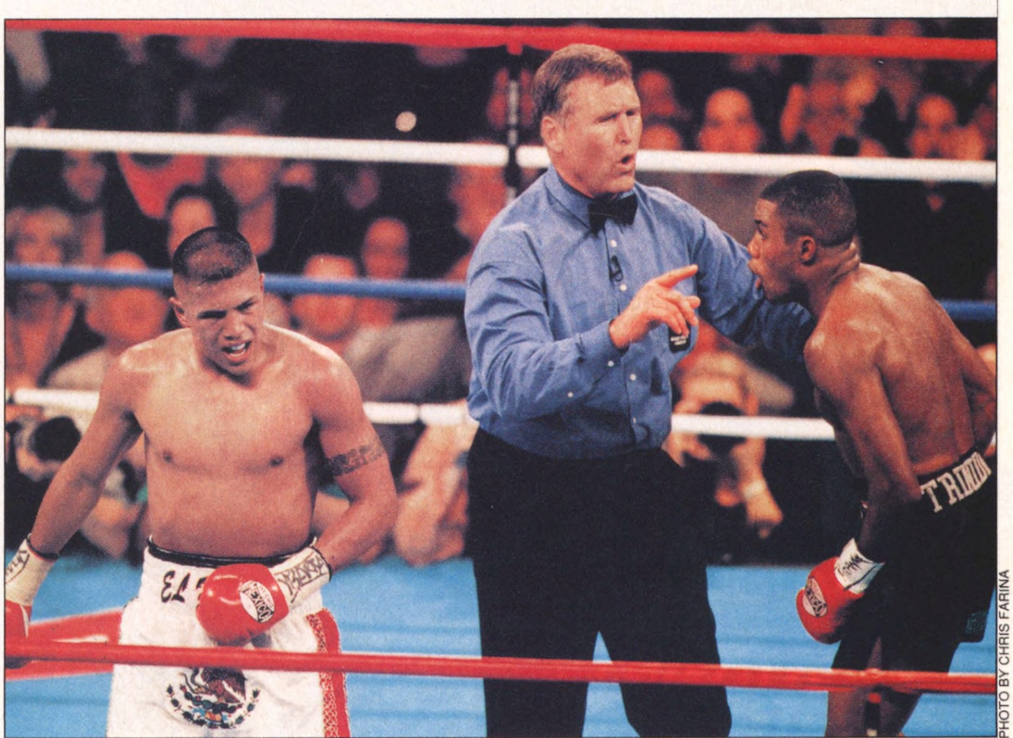


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Nady's warnings didn't help Vargas that much

What, one might ask, what was he thinking? I think I can answer that. Nothing. Here's a tip, Jim. Next time they pin that teeny little microphone on your person, remember to kick-start the circuitry connecting your vocal chords to your brain. And I say this with all due respect because Jim Lampley once complimented me, joining a two-person club led by my mother.

Lampley's gaff spoiled Calzaghe-Lacy for West Coast fans

FLASH: After I wrote up his Magoo, Lampley returned my call, conceded the mistake, apologized, and said he deserved it. He also wanted everyone to know he hadn't been trying to sabotage the Showtime presentation. "We don't play those kinds of games," he said. "They're hard-working fighters, and they deserve all the legitimate exposure they can get." Kind of makes it difficult to stay mad at the guy, but I kept the original item unchanged anyway because he makes more money than I do.

MAGOO 4: Time to blast another guy I consider a friend. When 5'9" James Toney moved up from cruiserweight in October 2003 to challenge Evander Holyfield, he weighed 217. His next four fights were at 227, 233, 235, and finally 237 against Hasim Rahman. We can all see where this thing is headed.

Toney should weigh 210, tops. Against Rahman, he might as well have been carrying a 27-pound pack of rocks on his back. The man ate his way out of the opportunity to make history.

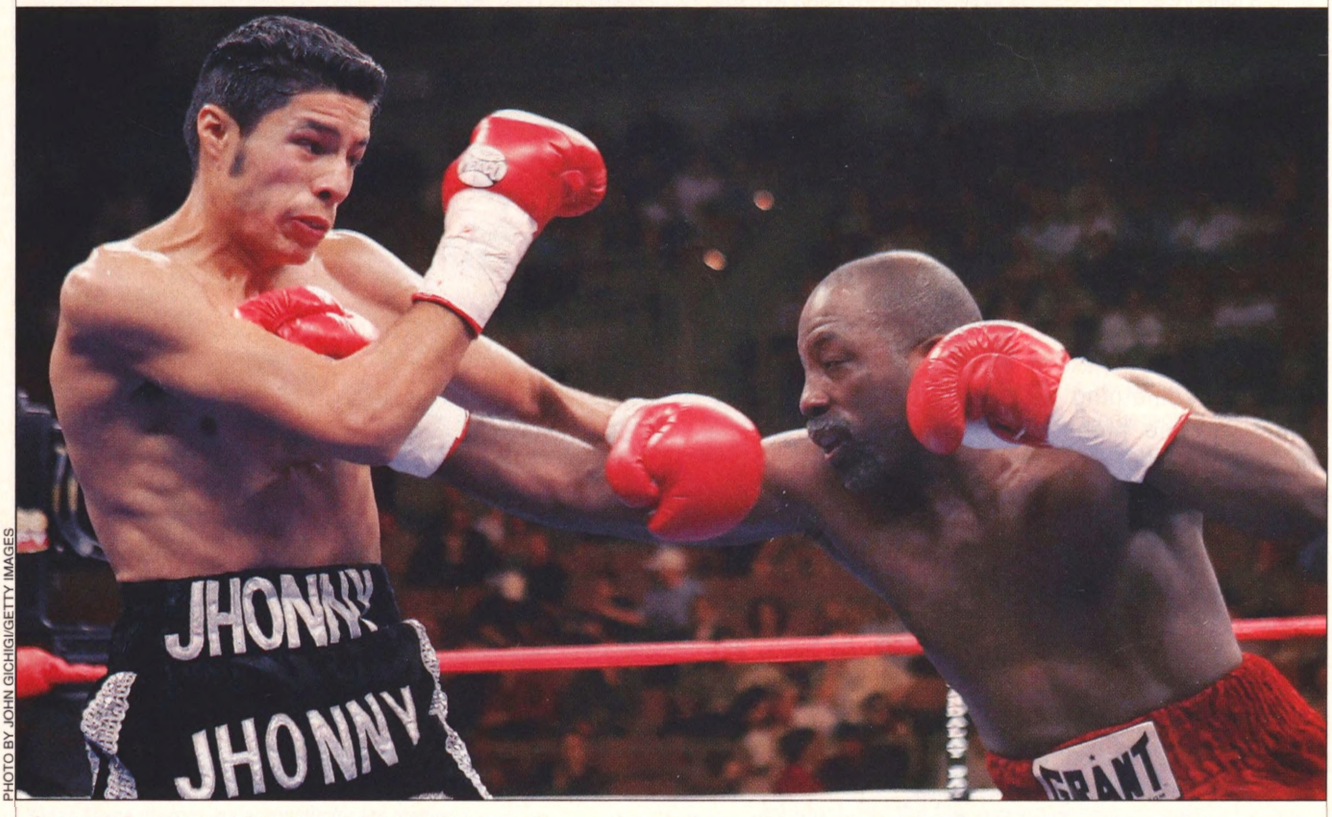


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

So what if Gonzalez and Johnson got off to a cautious start?

Note also that Rahman was a gentleman after it was scored a majority draw, not like some trash-talking fat guys I could name. In the gyms they say every moment you're not training, your next opponent is. But training won't do the job if you can't push yourself away from a Twinkie. Sorry, James. It is what it is.

FUTCH AWARD: Lacy deserves credit for fighting on Calzaghe's turf, for his fortitude during the match, and for his decency after suffering such a humiliating loss. We've seen other fighters under similar circumstances storm off to the dressing room or make ridiculous excuses.

HAPPY SWITCH: The L.A. Boxing Club, which had to be the largest gym on the Coast, shut down forever when a Korean Church took it over along with the Grand Olympic boxing venue next door. Proprietor Richard Allen used to sponsor a variety of programs for neighborhood kids. A wonderful cross-section of people trained in that great gym on the seedy edge of downtown.

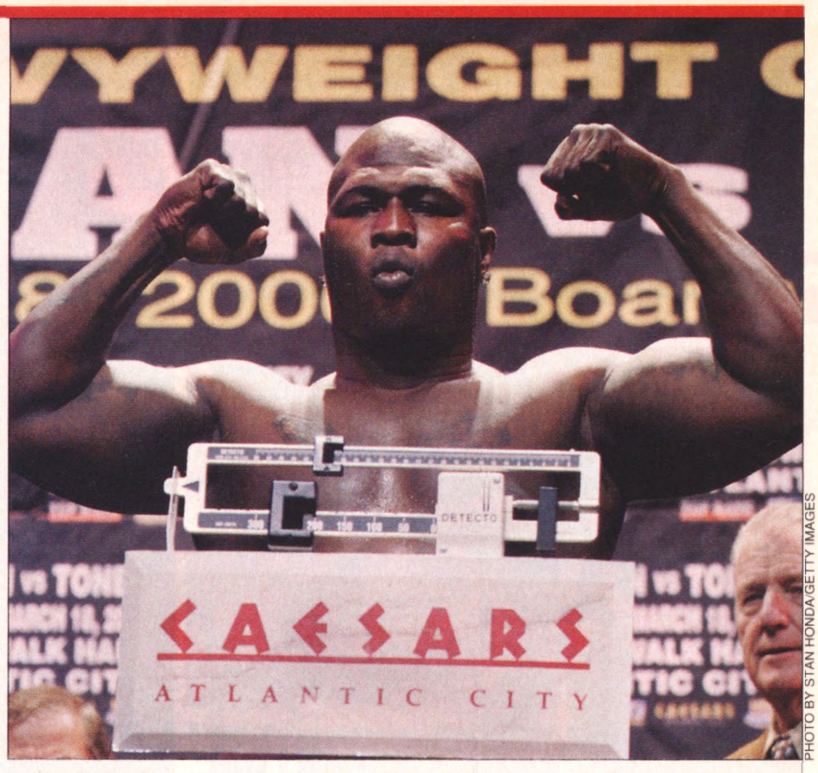


PHOTO BY STAN HONDA/GETTY IMAGES

Toney weighs in at a whopping 237 pounds

Its closing went largely unreported because of the shocking ineptitude of the city's only metropolitan daily, the *L.A. Times*. But here's some hopeful news. Bill Dwyre, who was its sports editor going back to the dinosaur races, is being replaced by *The Baltimore Sun*'s Randy Harvey. Under Dwyre's leadership, except for stories about Mike Tyson or Oscar De La Hoya, the *Times* was barely aware boxing existed. Yet it covers a region rich in fight fans. Steve Springer shaped into a savvy boxing writer, but he was rarely given the time or the news space to cover the sport.

Even powerful Lakers owner Jerry Buss hit a stone wall when he tried to convince Dwyre to devote space to Buss' now-defunct cards at the Great Western Forum and Arrowhead Pond. It didn't help, though, that many of those shows were held on Monday nights, even during football season. The two venues were always available because no one else was dumb enough to schedule a sporting event at such a ridiculous time. But that's another story.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Sadly, the L.A. Boxing Club has closed down

I don't know whether Harvey pays any attention to boxing, but he can't pay any less than Dwyre did, so this change can't be any worse than neutral. And who knows? Maybe it's downright positive. Let's hope it also works out for Baltimore fans. Incidentally, *The New York Times*, which bills itself the "Paper Of Record," is as boxing-clueless as its equally pretentious cousin in Los Angeles.

WHAT RULES?: Marc Ratner thinks he had safety issues as executive director of the Nevada commission? In his new job as vice president of Ultimate Fighting Championships, he supervises a "sport" whose tactics include chokeholds, knees to the face, and bending elbows back the wrong way. ■

[Camera Clicks]

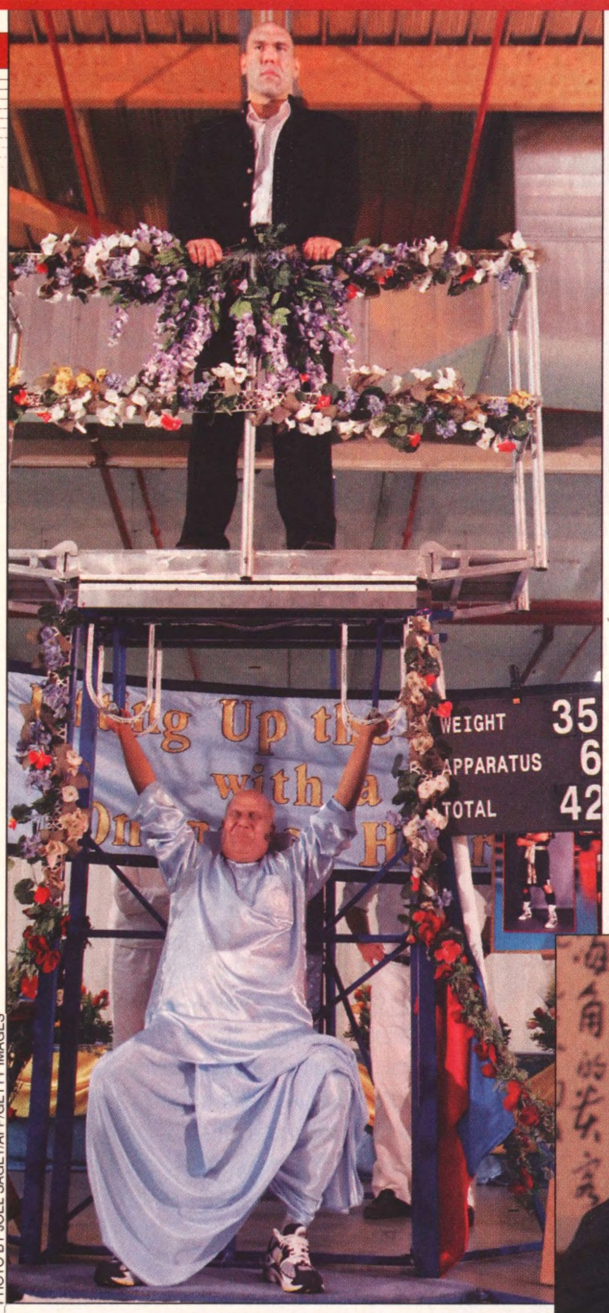


PHOTO BY JOEL SAGET/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Nicolay Valuev just didn't feel tall enough at a mere 7'0", so he's insisted upon being carried around on a pedestal that makes him twice as tall. Sri Chinmoy, a 74-year-old man from India, shows off his ageless strength, as he lifts the 330-plus-pound heavyweight over his head in a bizarre scene in Montreuil, France. Add a few dancing midgets, and this would probably qualify as the weirdest photo we've ever run in "Camera Clicks."

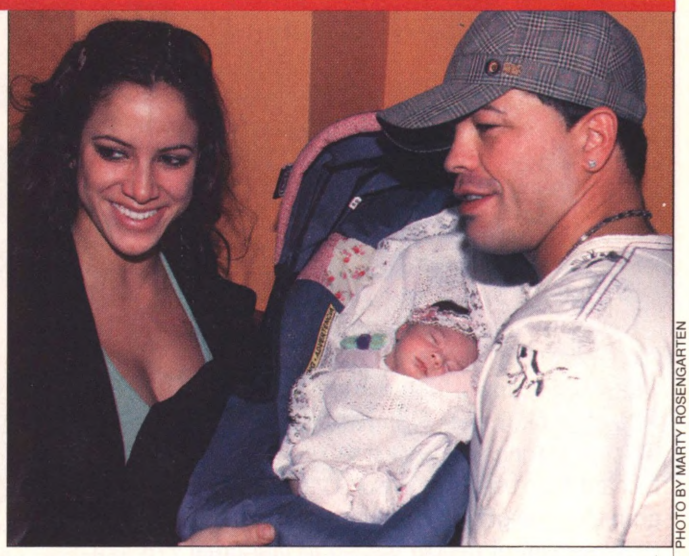


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

You know this kid's a Gatti because her eyes are practically sealed shut. New father Arturo Gatti poses with his girlfriend, Erika Rivera, and their daughter, Sofia Bella Gatti, at the press conference announcing Gatti's July fight with Carlos Baldomir. On a side note, we know Gatti has long wanted to have a supporting role on The Sopranos*, but does he really think it's going to help to wear Bobby Baccala's train conductor's hat?*

PHOTO BY CHINAFOTOPRESS/GETTY IMAGES

Boy, is this ever a sad sight: Mike Tyson's so punchy, he doesn't even know where a man's ear is located anymore. Just because you used to let your hands do your talking, Mike, that doesn't mean other people let their hands do their listening.

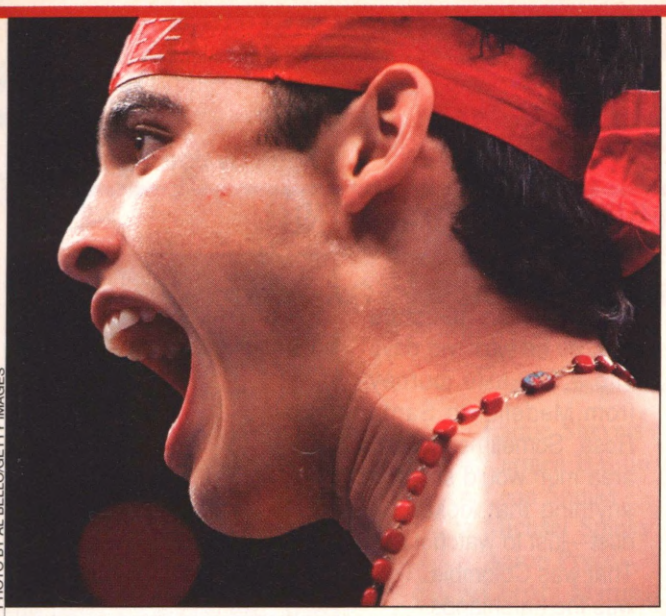


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

"See, I have all of my adult teeth." Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. dispels the rumors that he's actually only six years old, as he shows off his choppers prior to his April fight against Tyler Ziolowski. It remains to be seen whether Chavez is for real or only as real as the Tooth Fairy, but he took care of business quite easily against Ziolowski, demolishing him with a bodyshot inside of two rounds.

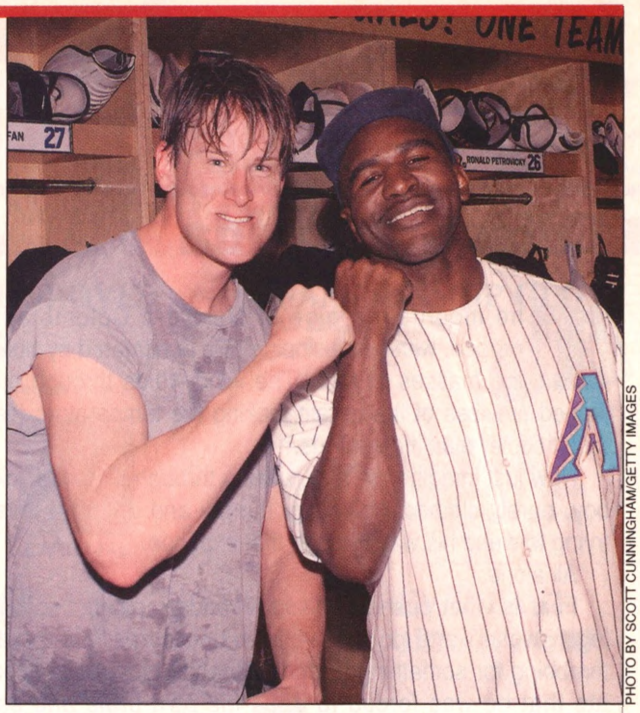


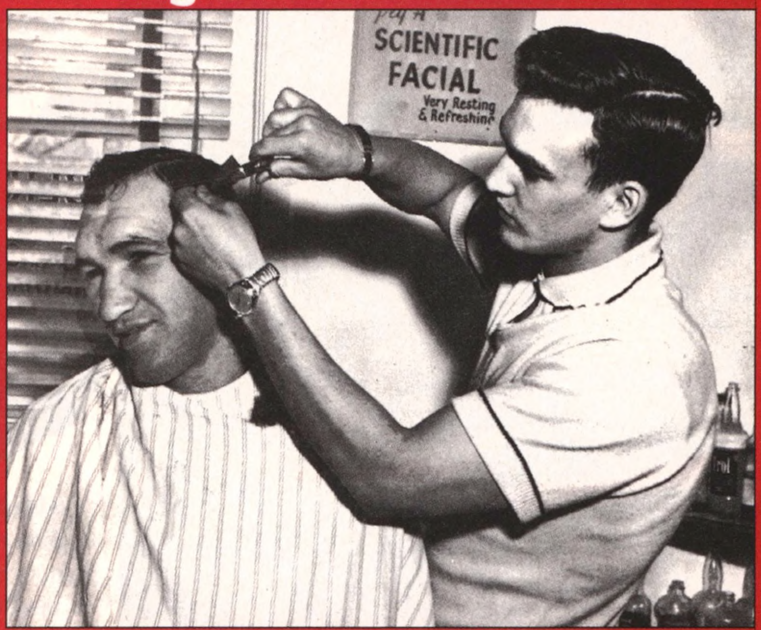
PHOTO BY SCOTT CUNNINGHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Wrong sport, wrong city ... but otherwise you're right on the mark, 'Vander. For a trip to the NHL's Atlanta Thrashers' locker room, Evander Holyfield elected to wear an Arizona Diamondbacks jersey, a somewhat peculiar choice. At least he didn't wear a Carolina Hurricanes jersey. That's the team the Thrashers played on this particular night, when Andy Hutton helped Holyfield's hometown team to a 5-2 victory.

PHOTO BY VITALIY ROZVADOVSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

No, Vitali Klitschko isn't examining a list of the injuries he's suffered over the past year or so. Those are ballot papers and Klitschko is at a polling station in Kiev, where he was running for mayor this spring. Klitschko could have won the election, but a large number of elderly people accidentally voted for Pat Buchanan, foiling the former heavyweight champ's bid.

Nostalgia Corner



Middleweight champ Gene Fullmer gets a clip job from his brother, Jay, while training for his May 1957 bout with Ray Robinson. After Sugar Ray kayoed Fullmer in the fifth round, he went back to the barbershop for a much-needed "Scientific Facial."

By Joe Santoliquito

Edison Miranda Middleweight

The mountain region of Northern Colombia is rugged, with small sloping hills punctuated by hulking masses of rock. The wind whips through the jagged crevices of the terrain making the temperature feel much cooler than it actually is.

Now just imagine the fear running through a 10-year-old boy, barely clothed, shivering, hungry and dry from thirst trying to wend his way through that expanse.

All alone.

Fear is what pushed Edison Miranda forward. His frail legs swollen and pocked with oozing sores, his throat throbbing for something to drink. Miranda grew so desperate that he was forced to drink his own urine and eat weeds by the side of the road to sustain himself.

Cars would pass the boy, as he was two days into a 500-mile journey from Medellin to Santa Rosa. Sometimes in that area men would shoot at anything that kicked up dust—just to watch it die. That was Colombia. That was the harshlands.

That was also Miranda's low point in a nomadic childhood. The time when he felt closest to death. He collapsed one day, too tired to budge another step on his long journey. He lay there like road kill, until a compassionate trucker driving by scooped him up and took him to Santa Rosa.

Knowing that, you think Miranda has any fears whatsoever when he enters the ring? After surviving an unimaginable childhood, filled with abuse and daily life-or-death risk, the 25-year-old middleweight, who can best be categorized as a straight-ahead slugger, has forged a 26-0 (23) record. He's scheduled to fight IBF middleweight titlist Arthur Abraham in Germany on August 19. The title fight was set up following Miranda's seventh-round stoppage of Howard Eastman in March on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*.

Miranda's drive and diligence stems from his youth.

The one person in Miranda's life who was supposed to nurture him, raise him, the one who was always supposed to be there for him, abandoned him in a carnival in Cali, Colombia. His mother was a 14-year-old girl the day she left him. In her search for a better life for her son, she

(Continued on Page 87)

Pro Record

2001		
March 16	Jose Chiquillo, Barranquilla, Colombia	KO 1
March 30	Luis Blandon, Barranquilla	KO 1
April 27	Vidal Diaz, Barranquilla	KO 1
May 18	Saul Torres, Barranquilla	KO 1
Aug. 24	Fidel Sarmiento, Barranquilla	KO 2
Oct. 5	Alfonso Mosquera, Panama City, Panama	KO 1
Dec. 14	Jose Chiquillo, Cartagena, Colombia	KO 1
2002		
June 5	Nelson Gil, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic	KO 1
June 12	Joselito Del Rosario, Santo Domingo	KO 1
June 15	Rafael De La Cruz, San Cristobal, Dominican Republic	KO 2
2003		
March 21	Joselito Del Rosario, Santo Domingo	KO 1
April 1	Roberto Jimenez, Santo Domingo	KO 1
April 10	Danilo Serrano, Santo Domingo	KO 1
April 15	Jose Luis Robles, Santo Domingo	KO 1
June 14	Manuel De La Rosa, La Romana, Dominican Republic	KO 2
July 20	Meregildo De Los Santos, Cotui, Dominican Republic	KO 1
July 25	Hector Rodriguez, Moca, Dominican Republic	KO 1
July 28	Feliberto Alvarez, Santo Domingo	KO 3
Aug. 29	Darmel Castillo, Panama City	KO 5
2004		
Dec. 11	Jonalis Reyes, San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic	KO 1
2005		
Feb. 26	Saul Torres, Colombia	KO 1
May 20	Sam Reese, Hollywood, FL	W 10
June 16	Jose Varela, Coconut Creek, FL	W 12
Aug. 26	Hilario Guzman, Hollywood	W 6
Oct. 21	Sherwin Davis, Hollywood	KO 3
2006		
March 24	Howard Eastman, Hollywood	KO 7

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
26	26	0	0	23

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★ Carmen Basilio
★ Emile Griffith
★ Jake LaMotta
★ Alan Minter
★ Nino Benvenuti

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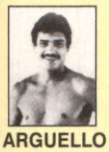

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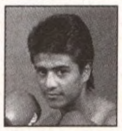
★ Kid Gavilan
★ Ken Buchanan
★ Azumah Nelson
★ Buddy McGirt
★ Michael Carbajal
★ Barry McGuigan
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
★ Carlos Palomino
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Dwight Qawi
★ Tommy Morrison
★ Angelo Dundee
★ Angel Manfredy
★ Terry Norris
★ Livingstone Bramble
★ Ricardo "Finito" Lopez
★ James "Buster" Douglas
★ Danny "Little Red" Lopez



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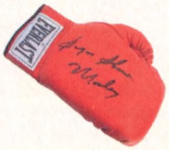

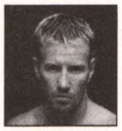

WARD

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★ "Sugar" Shane Mosley
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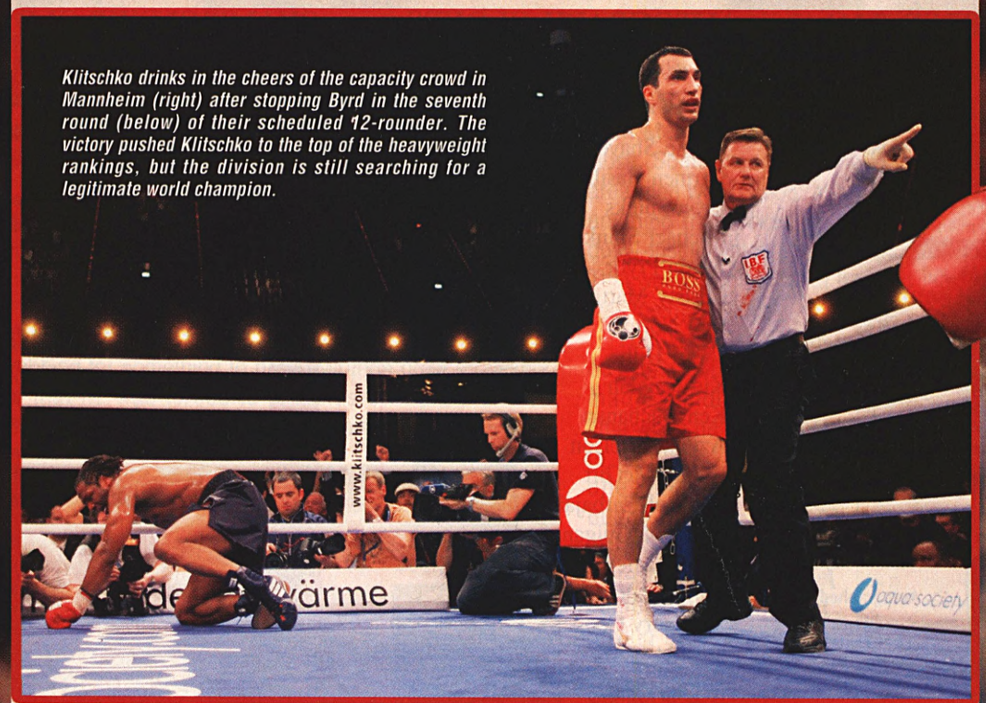


Klitschko drinks in the cheers of the capacity crowd in Mannheim (right) after stopping Byrd in the seventh round (below) of their scheduled 12-rounder. The victory pushed Klitschko to the top of the heavyweight rankings, but the division is still searching for a legitimate world champion.

By Eric Raskin

Whatever happens with Chris Byrd's boxing career from this point forward, we should all be very grateful for his presence near the top for the last decade or so. Though puny by today's heavyweight standards and almost completely devoid of punching power, he never ducked any opponent, he always gave an honest effort, and he even gave us a few thrills. And, perhaps most importantly, he proved the perfect foil for Wladimir Klitschko, giving the public a heavyweight to believe in who, unlike Byrd, actually looks the part.

Over a five-week span during March and April, we saw four significant heavyweight bouts, concluding with Klitschko's seventh-round knockout win over Byrd. We saw one fight that provided clarity in the muddled and muddied heavyweight picture (Klitschko-Byrd). We saw one fight that provided no clarity whatsoever and instead added to the muddle (Hasim Rahman vs. James Toney). We saw one fight that provided heart-pounding action (Sergei Liakhovich vs. Lamon Brewster). And we saw one fight that provided eye-closing inaction (Dominick Guinn vs. Audley Harrison).

One could argue that the Guinn-Harrison staring contest doesn't deserve designation as a "significant bout," especially when the other three fights being discussed were all alphabet title fights. But it was perhaps the most telling fight of the four in terms of explaining why fans are depressed about the state of the heavyweight division. Just a couple of years ago, these two appeared to represent the future of the heavyweight division. But they quickly developed into the Ryan Leaf and Michael Olowakandi of the boxing world, and, when sharing a ring, they seemed to be daring fans to turn off their televisions and give up on the heavyweight division altogether.

PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Relative newcomer Liakhovich rocks Brewster with a right hand during their highly entertaining bout in which "The White Wolf" upset Brewster via 12-round unanimous decision. The big win earned Liakhovich the number-four spot in THE RING's heavyweight ratings.

The abject failure of 2000 Olympic gold medalist Harrison, seen by some as the logical successor to fellow Brit Lennox Lewis, is reasonably emblematic of how badly things have gone wrong for this division since the search for the man to replace Lewis began.

So thank you, Chris Byrd. Wladimir Klitschko isn't necessarily the man we're looking for, but Byrd has done a helluva job of helping people to believe he might be. And in a heavyweight division full of "is nots," a "might be" becomes a valuable asset.

The facts are that Byrd was rated number one by THE RING coming into his April 22 meeting with Klitschko, and Klitschko is now rated number one by THE RING after destroying Byrd. On paper, this was a tremendous win for Klitschko, a sign to his supporters that he's bounced back from his devastating knockout losses to Corrie Sanders and Lamon Brewster. But when you take a step back and look at the victory from a different perspective, it was as meaningless as a win over the number-one guy in the division could possibly be. For starters, Byrd was basically number one by default. Also, Klitschko had already dominated Byrd once before, when they met in October 2000. A 6'6", 241-pound heavyweight with a good jab and good power should always have an easy time with a 6'0", 213½-pounder with the punch of a middleweight. The questions looming over Klitschko had to do with his chin and his confidence, and neither was tested against Byrd. What did this win prove? Merely that Klitschko is better than Jameel McCline and Andrew Golota, two super-sized heavyweights who'd narrowly failed to beat Byrd in recent years. But we already knew he was better than those guys.

You can't knock the win or the performance. Klitschko shot down Byrd and looked devastating doing it. But he has quite a bit still to prove. And that goes for everyone in the division, really.

There are reasons to question each fighter in the top 10. Rahman, in the best shape of his career, could do no better than a draw against a terribly out of shape Toney. (In a strong heavyweight division, wins over Kali Meehan and Monte Barrett might not even get you into the rankings, but in the 2006 heavyweight class, they get you to number two.) Toney has skills to spare, but that's not the only spare he's packing. In two alphabet title challenges against heavyweights with less ability than him, Toney has come away with a no-contest and a draw. Liakhovich has

beaten Brewster and Guinn in his last two, but is still a relatively new entrant into the mix. Brewster is Mr. Inconsistency. Byrd is on the slide. We can only pray that John Ruiz is too. Nicolay Valuev is still a project—a project who arguably deserved to lose his last two fights. Then there are the younger guys, the prospects disguised as top-10 contenders because there simply aren't 10 heavyweights who are better right now: Calvin Brock and Sam Peter. Both have potential, but both have only recently begun testing themselves against dangerous opposition.

Add it all up, and you have to ask: Has the heavyweight division ever been in worse shape than this?

"In the mid-'90s, when Bruce Seldon, Frank Bruno, and Frans Botha were the three champions, I think that was just as bad. I think Rahman and Klitschko would beat all of those guys," opined veteran boxing writer Tom Hauser. And when you focus purely on the alphabet titleholders, he may be correct. "It's hard to say if this is the worst era ever. Could these guys now have beaten Jim Braddock? Sure. But when Braddock was the champ, Joe Louis was coming up. When Floyd Patterson was the champ, Sonny Liston was coming up. It goes in cycles. The heavyweights now are mediocre, there's just no way around that. This is a lousy time for heavyweights. And, if there's a crossover star on the horizon, we don't know about him yet."

HBO boxing analyst Max Kellerman disagrees with Hauser about certain points—especially his take on the heavyweights of the 1990s.

"Usually, the easiest thing to say and sound like you know what you're talking about is, 'The heavyweights stink,'" said Kellerman. "And people were saying that throughout the '90s, when the heavyweights were excellent. I thought that the '90s, other than the '70s, were the all-time best era of heavyweights. But the history of the heavyweight division is basically that you are lucky if you have a dominant heavyweight champion on top and overmatched contenders underneath. Joe Louis. Jack Dempsey to an extent. Larry Holmes, in a way, although he wasn't really as dominant, fight to fight. Other times, you have a division like in the '30s, after Gene Tunney and before

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Toney tags Rahman with a booming right to the head during their heavyweight showdown in Atlantic City. Unfortunately, the poorly conditioned Toney couldn't sustain his attack with any consistency and had to settle for a 12-round draw.

KLITSCH PERFORMANCE

Manheim, Germany: It wasn't the substance on Klitschko's gloves that had Byrd talking after their rematch before a capacity crowd of 14,000 at the SAP Arena. It was the substance *in* Klitschko's gloves.

Improving upon his one-sided 12-round decision win over Byrd to claim the WBO heavyweight title 5½ years earlier, Klitschko knocked out the American in the seventh round to end Byrd's three-year reign as IBF titleholder. Byrd, 213½, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Flint, Michigan, was never in the fight, suffering violent knockdowns in the fifth and seventh rounds en route to becoming a crimson-faced kayo victim.

Klitschko was too big and too strong for Byrd

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Byrd's only moments of success came in round one, when he landed several well-timed lunging straight left hands to Klitschko's body to edge the round. By round two, the long jab of Klitschko, 241, Hamburg, Germany, via Kiev, Ukraine, was landing consistently, and right hands were following. Three good rights in the final minute of the third won Klitschko that round as well, and, as he headed back to his corner at the sound of the bell, Byrd had a rapidly swelling right eye.

Early in the fifth, Klitschko delivered a one-two, and the "two" landed with maximum force, springing blood from Byrd's nose and pancaking him on the canvas. Klitschko, 30, opened up with both hands after Byrd, 35, beat the count of referee Wayne Kelly (USA), and he landed enough crushing blows to arguably earn a 10-7 round with just a single knockdown. It was apparent by this point that the only way Byrd could win would be if the Ukrainian punched himself out.

But "The Steel Hammer" instead remained composed and measured his foe, and, in the seventh, a vicious combination ended the fight. A right seemed to scrape across Byrd's face, perhaps opening the bloody gash that would soon emerge, and a thudding right hand dropped the smaller man for a second time. Byrd scrambled to his feet, but there was blood all over his face, and he clearly had no hope of winning, so Kelly correctly called off the fight at 41 seconds of the round. With the win, his fourth straight since losing to Lamon Brewster, Klitschko moved to 46-3 (41).

"I can be honest, I was never in the fight. He fought a great fight," admitted Byrd, 39-3-1 (20). Last time they fought, Byrd tried to pin the loss on a mysterious substance that made his eyes swell. This time, he pinned it purely on the abilities of his opponent.

Television: HBO

Promoter: K2 Promotions, SportFive, Sauerland Events

(4-22-06)

—E.R.

Joe Louis. And that's what we're experiencing now. We're experiencing a division without a dominant champion. It's so rare to have several great heavyweights in or around their primes at the same time. You have the '70s, and you have the '90s. In the '90s, you had Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, Riddick Bowe, Lennox Lewis, comebacking George Foreman and Larry Holmes, contenders like Ray Mercer and Tommy Morrison at the beginning of the decade, and, at the end, David Tua and Ike Ibeabuchi and Chris Byrd. In the middle you had guys like Andrew Golota. You had a lot of stuff going on in the '90s. And I think that this division suffers not only on its own, but in comparison with an excellent era that just passed."

Whatever your stance on the heavyweights of the '90s, you have to agree that lean years have come upon us now. Kellerman, though, doesn't think it's quite as bad as most observers do.

"I think Brewster—even in the wake of his loss—Brock, Toney, and Wladimir are the four guys with the potential upside, the guys whose names make my ears perk up. The problem with this division is not that it lacks depth; it's that it lacks a real number-one guy.

The division has good 1A-tier depth. It doesn't have that first-tier depth that the '90s did, but it has depth on the next tier, guys who are not 'B' fighters, but they're not 'A' fighters either. There are a lot of those guys. Rahman fits into that category too."

Brock, currently rated eighth by THE RING and preparing to make his HBO debut in late-June, sees things along the same lines as Kellerman.

"I've come along at a time when it's wide open, but not weak," declared the undefeated "Boxing Banker." "The heavyweight division is actually strong at the top. Wladimir Klitschko, he's very good. Liakhovich, he's very good. Valuev, he's so big, he's a challenge for anybody. Rahman's a strong fighter too. They're all good in their own way and their own style. But there's no undisputed champion, so that makes it wide open."

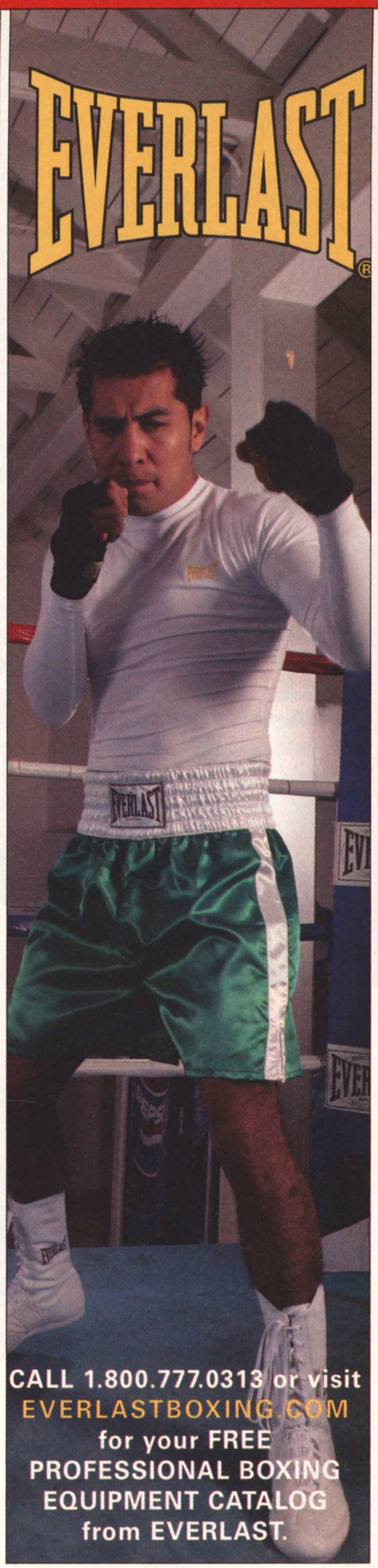
Ah yes, that nagging problem of not having an undisputed champion. Lewis was the last to hold that distinction. He became the "linear" champ when he defeated Shannon Briggs in 1998, and gained universal recognition as the undisputed champ when he unified the three most widely recognized alphabet titles with Holyfield the following year. And no amount of alphabet stripping nonsense could make him any less undisputed. He remained champ until Rahman defeated him in '01, became champ again when he evened the score against "The Rock" seven months later, and retired as champ at the beginning of 2004.

Since then, the struggle to find another undisputed champ has gone about as well as Lewis' efforts to get off the canvas in South Africa on April 22, 2001—it looked for a moment like the division might rise up, but ultimately, it couldn't find its footing. Vitali Klitschko was the top contender when Lewis left, and he quickly claimed THE RING title, but the public didn't fully accept him as champ, and, before he had a chance to win everyone over, injuries drove him into retirement.

"The first thing we need is one heavyweight champion," Hauser insisted. "Even when it was Braddock, and people understood that he was not the best heavyweight, at least he was *the* heavyweight champion. You don't have that now, and without a heavyweight champion, it just gets further diluted. Fights like Valuev-Owen Beck and Liakhovich-Kevin McBride, it's a joke to call those heavyweight championship fights. Those are fights nobody cares about. Boxing has always been corrupt, but at least people understood back in the day that it was in everybody's best interest to have one champion. In every other sport, everything builds toward crowning one champion. Boxing is the only major sport where you don't have that."

"I think it's very important to have one heavyweight champion—not just for the division, but for the sport of boxing," seconded Brock. "When the heavyweight division is strong, boxing is strong. It's sad, nobody but the boxing pundits knows who has the titles. People always ask me who the heavyweight champion is, and I have to tell them four different names. That's a big problem for boxing. So my goal is not just to win a belt, I want people to know I'm the one and only champ."

Perhaps Brock will be precisely that one-day, but, for now, everything goes through Wladimir Klitschko. A fight between Klitschko and Rahman, though not a pay-per-view blockbuster by any means, would fill THE RING'S vacancy. Maybe not everyone would be comfortable with that, but that's really a symptom of the state of the division. We may have our doubts about these two chinny, in-and-out big men, but nearly every reasonable observer rates them first and second in the division right now, and, in the old days, that was how championships got filled. (Remember Floyd Patterson vs. Archie Moore after Rocky Marciano retired?) A Klitschko-Rahman winner would clearly become the guy to beat in the division. But would the public accept him as an "undisputed" champion? Probably not, since much of the public has developed a reliance on alphabet belts, and wearing two of them, plus a RING belt, isn't enough for everybody. With that in mind, an alternate solution would be to put together a four-man tournament: Klitschko vs. Liakhovich in a battle of



THE "WOLF" BARES HIS FANGS

Cleveland, Ohio: Great heavyweight fighters are wonderful to have, but, at the end of the day, wouldn't you rather watch a great heavyweight fight than a great heavyweight fighter? Brewster and Liakhovich may not be headed for Canastota, but their 12-round tussle at the Wolstein Center was a Fight of the Year candidate, and that was more than enough to make up for the disappointment of learning that Brewster is not the savior some people were making him out to be.

Liakhovich, 238½, Scottsdale, Arizona, via Vitebsk, Belarus, probably isn't the future ruler of the division either, but he was impressive on this night, showing tons of heart to take the WBO strap from one of the biggest-hearted fighters in the game. Brewster, a soft-looking 232, Vero Beach, Florida, via Indianapolis, Indiana, edged the first round, but "The White Wolf" seemed to get better with each round over the next three, proving effective with jabs, straight rights, lead left hooks, and especially right hands to the body.

The fifth and sixth were both Round of the Year candidates. Round five featured wild back-and-forth action, with Brewster, 32, hurting Liakhovich, 29, early, and Liakhovich hurting Brewster late. The sixth was just as good, with the challenger's right to the body affecting Brewster repeatedly. In the seventh, Brewster, 33-3 (29), was keeping his left arm low to protect against that right hand, but his best defense is the proverbial good offense, and he evened the fight up on THE RING'S scorecard by dropping Liakhovich with a series of three big bodyshots with 10 seconds to go in the round.

Liakhovich's trainer, Kenny Weldon, had been begging his charge to box more at distance, and, after the seventh-round scare, the Belarusian started listening to him, with excellent results. Both of Brewster's eyes were swelling—it would later be revealed that he had suffered a detached retina in the first round (after having eye problems leading up to the fight)—and, in the ninth, boxing from a distance Liakhovich hurt Brewster badly with a right hand to the ear. The beltholder proceeded to take a pounding for the rest of the stanza, and the fact that he stayed on his feet was an astounding testament to his chin and his will. But neither could make up for the fact that Liakhovich, 23-1 (14), had more in the tank than he did, and the challenger outboxed and outfought him down the stretch to secure the victory.

All three American judges scored for Liakhovich. Dana DePaolo had it 115-113, Tom Miller saw it 115-112, and Phil Rogers scored it 117-110. THE RING'S card read 116-111.

The referee was Ernie Shariff (USA).

Television: Showtime

Promoter: Don King Productions

(4-1-06)

—E.R.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Liakhovich catches Brewster with a left hook

Europe's best, Rahman-Toney II to determine America's best, and let the winners meet to give us a champion you'd have to acknowledge as "The Man."

It would be wonderful for boxing if that happened, but even if it does, that doesn't mean we'll have established a *dominant* champion—the next Louis or even the next Lewis. Today's heavyweight division is overflowing with the any-given-Sunday sense, the feeling that, depending on the style matchup, assorted lower-ranked guys could easily defeat assorted higher-ranked guys. Heck, would you put it beyond the realm of possibility that Corrie Sanders could come out of retirement and bounce the guy currently rated number one in his very first fight back?

Hauser conducted a poll earlier this year for his Internet column that asked 20 boxing experts to pick a winner in every possible match involving the heavyweight top 10, and the fighters were exactly the same as they are now, except that Liakhovich was out and Tua was in. The results saw Toney getting the most "wins," followed by Klitschko, Byrd, and Peter. When the experts regard, as Hauser calls him, "a middleweight with an eating disorder" as the best heavyweight, that's troubling

NOBODY LOSES ... BUT EVERYBODY LOSES

The draw verdict enabled Rahman to keep the WBC strap

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

Atlantic City, New Jersey: If Rahman is "The Rock," then Toney is "The Rolls," his blubbery stomach capturing the boxing world's attention before the fight and seemingly proving the difference over 12 rounds at Boardwalk Hall. At a terribly overweight 237 pounds, Toney eked out a draw, allowing Rahman to retain the WBC heavyweight title in his first defense. But it was impossible not to wonder how different it might have been if the 217-pound Toney who whipped Evander Holyfield a couple of years ago had shown up. In better shape, Toney almost certainly would have gone home with the belt—and would even have been able to fit it around his waist.

Talk of Toney's conditioning aside, this was a reasonably entertaining bout that was close and competitive from the first bell to the last. Rahman was in phenomenal shape at 238 pounds, and he was able to keep a tremendous workrate, throwing nearly 80 punches per round, a number you don't often see from heavyweights. But if The Rock was the busier puncher, Toney was the much more accurate one, and the result was a fight that could have been scored either way.

In the opening round, the 6'2½" Rahman, 33, Baltimore, Maryland, did solid work when Toney stayed at distance, and the 5'9" Toney, 37, Detroit, Michigan, got the better of it when he managed to slip inside. The action picked up in the third, with Toney scoring with a chopping right hand and fighting well off the ropes. "Lights Out" won that exciting stanza, but the question was whether he could maintain that pace—the answer was no. Rahman outboxed him in the fourth and fifth, with Toney just not throwing enough punches to win either round.

Toney landed well with both hands in the sixth, and, even though his punches were having no effect on Rahman, they were scoring cleanly enough to carry the round. But then, in the seventh, Toney's output dipped again, allowing Rahman to earn the point. The rounds just got tougher and tougher to score after that, Toney doing well in spots, Rahman moving his hands more consistently. With the belt seemingly up for grabs entering the 12th, Rahman, 41-5-2 (33), appeared to want it more than did Toney, 69-4-3 (43) with 1 no-contest, outjabbing the challenger and outworking him.

The Rock thought that solid final round had assured him of the victory, but, as it turned out, he needed it just to get a draw. Judge John Stewart (USA) had Rahman winning 117-111, but both Tom Kaczmarek (USA) and Nobuaki Uratani (Japan) scored it 114-114. THE RING preferred Toney's cleaner punches by the narrowest of margins, 115-114.

The referee was Eddie Cotton (USA).

Television: HBO

Promoters: Top Rank, Goossen-Tutor, Caesars Atlantic City

(3-18-06)

—E.R.

indeed.

"I don't think there's anybody who has star potential and the ability to go with it," Hauser said. "If Nicolay Valuev was a great fighter, then with his size, maybe he could cross over. But he isn't a great fighter. He's ordinary, barely world-class. It once appeared Wladimir Klitschko could be the guy, but most people's opinions of him have changed. If there's one guy who could have a lot of appeal, it's Sam Peter—if he learns how to fight."

Now there's a caveat that gets your attention like a right uppercut to the groin. We're giving consideration as a possible savior of the heavyweight division to a man who can't even fight. Granted, that's an extreme viewpoint on Peter, but there's at least some truth to it. We're also giving consideration to a guy who's been knocked down nine times in his last eight fights, a trash talker with about 30 pounds worth of love handles, a guy who, in peak form, couldn't beat the love-handled fighter, and a fighter who's been kayoed by Mo Harris.

Maybe the version of Wladimir Klitschko we saw against Chris Byrd was a mirage created by the perfect style and the perfect circumstance. But we'll take a mirage over miles and miles of open desert. ■

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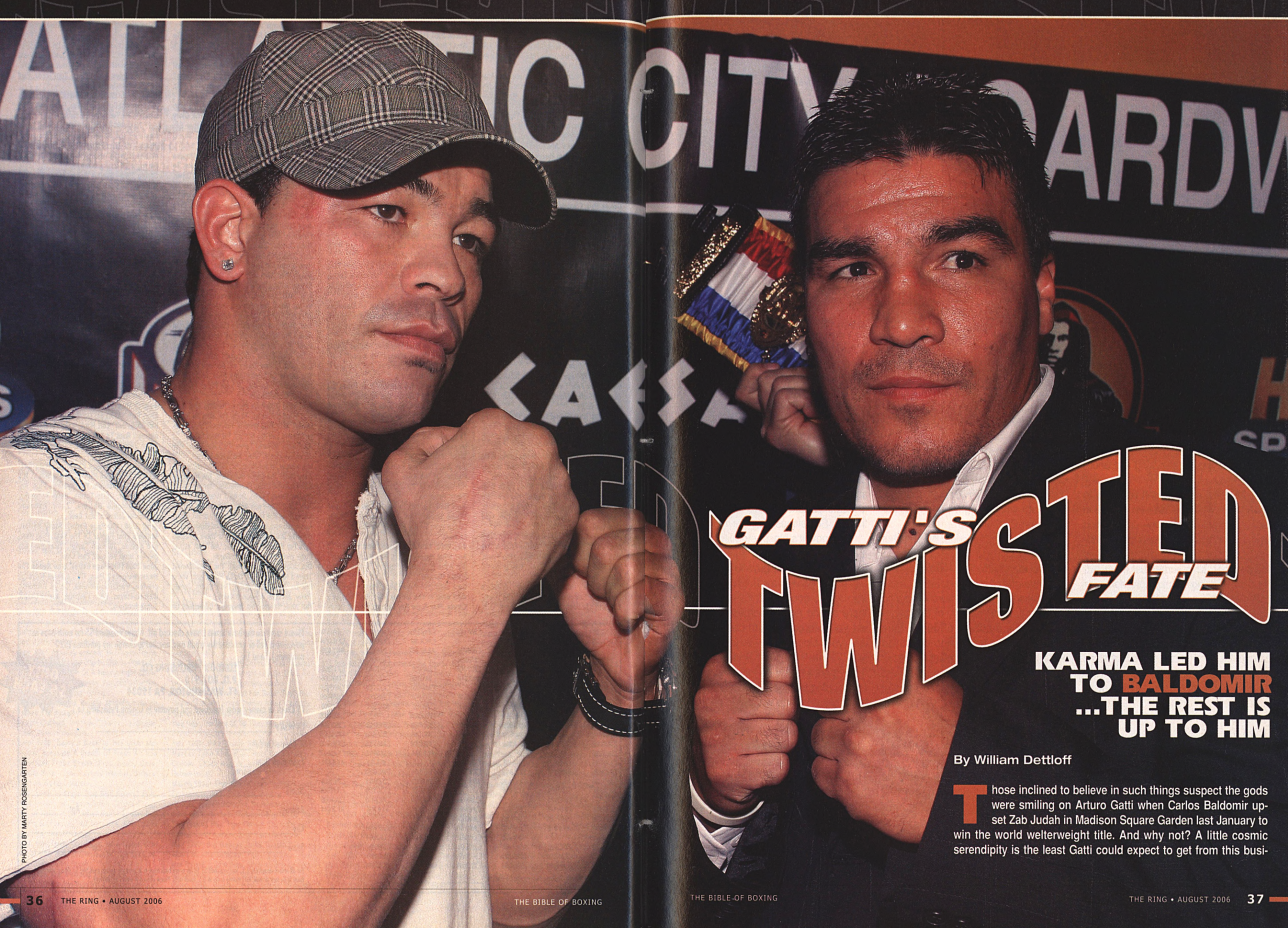

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GATTI'S TWISTED FATE

KARMA LED HIM TO BALDOMIR ...THE REST IS UP TO HIM

By William Dettloff

Those inclined to believe in such things suspect the gods were smiling on Arturo Gatti when Carlos Baldomir upset Zab Judah in Madison Square Garden last January to win the world welterweight title. And why not? A little cosmic serendipity is the least Gatti could expect to get from this busi-

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Gatti comes off the ropes with a right uppercut during his January 2006 bout with previously undefeated Thomas Damgaard in Atlantic City. Gatti stopped the Dane in the 11th round to set up the fight with welterweight champion Baldomir.

ness after all he's donated to its well-being. And we're not talking just about his plasma.

That Gatti finds himself readying to fight Baldomir for the title—on July 22 in where else but Atlantic City—after getting what looked potentially like a career-ending beating at the ethereal fists of Floyd Mayweather is, to some, just more evidence of boxing's kinky contradictions and kooky title configurations—part and parcel of its purportedly devalued state.

We agree that on the surface Gatti getting a shot at the world title appears a bit odd. Especially considering that all he did to qualify for it after taking the worst beating of his life against Mayweather was to outpoint an unproven and, as it turned out, unremarkable Thomas Damgaard. But there are reasons for it that make sense—and not just in the bizarro world that is pro boxing. Foremost is that Gatti is, well, Gatti.

"Gatti will always get title fights because he's exciting, popular, and marketable," said Showtime's Al Bernstein. "That's just part of the game. It's because boxing is so entrepreneurial. I like to say it's laissez-faire capitalism taken to the extreme. So things aren't always going to be fair. For example, Baldomir beat Judah, and, even after Judah's loss to Mayweather, if Judah and Gatti were to fight tomorrow, Judah would be the favorite."

Indeed, in a fairer world, the title shot would be going to Mayweather or to Antonio Margarito, THE RING's top two welterweight contenders as of press time. Clearly, they are more deserving than Gatti. Mayweather, of course, is fresh off his drubbing of Judah, and Margarito in his last outing destroyed battle-worn but tough Manuel Gomez in less than a round. Both are worlds more qualified than Gatti, but that doesn't mean as much as you'd think. And maybe that's a good thing.

Think of all the fights that never would have happened if the fights that get made were determined only by what was fair. Or, in boxing speak, if only the most deserving challengers got title shots. Ray Leonard never would have gotten a shot at Marvin Hagler. George Foreman wouldn't have gotten within driving distance of Michael Moorer (or of Evander Holyfield, for that matter). Larry Holmes-Gerry Cooney, at the time the highest grossing prizefight in history, never would have happened. A fighter's success at the box office is frequently just as important as is his title-fight worthiness. Sometimes it's more important.

We know it's blasphemous, but with all the so-called "world" titles floating around these days, guys just don't get frozen out the way they used to if they're too good. This isn't 1936 and there are no Archie Moores. The closest you can come—and believe us, it isn't very close at all—is Vernon Forrest, Chris Byrd, and Winky Wright, three guys who for a while had a hard time getting big fights because none of the guys at the top wanted to be made to look bad against them.

But the way it is now, if a good fighter gets frozen out of one organization's rankings, he can go after a titlist in another. If anything, the proliferation of all the belts has created a shortage of reasonably qualified challengers. So having a big name, with or without good recent credentials, is worth more than ever. (For the record, we prefer it the old way—you know, one world, one world champion

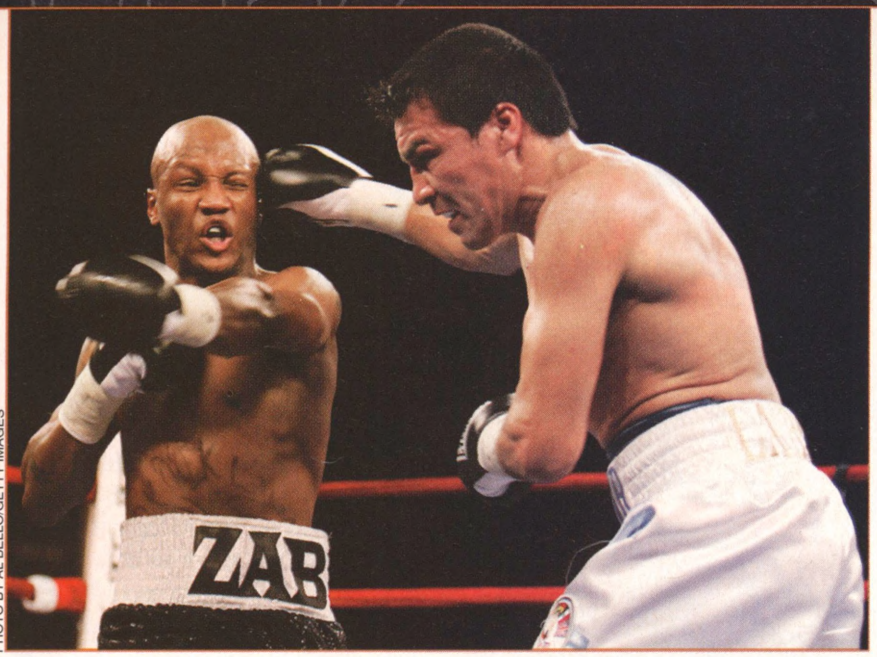


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Zab Judah winces as Baldomir connects with a right hand en route to a huge upset victory and the welterweight title. The Argentinean surprised almost everybody with his strength and determination, which offset Judah's speed and athletic ability and carried Baldomir to a unanimous decision.

and all that, but, hey, if you have to find one good thing about the current chaos, this could be considered it, we suppose.)

It isn't only Gatti's singular popularity that has influenced the happy position in which he finds himself now. It's also the growing recognition among promoters and fans that a loss is by no means an impediment to a guy, albeit the right guy, getting his shot at a big fight.

"Why should Gatti be penalized?" asked Philadelphia-based promoter J Russell Peltz. "Judah got his backside handed to him by Baldomir and still got the Floyd fight. Erik Morales was undressed by Zahir Raheem, but still fought Manny Pacquiao next. In today's market, talent has less to do with getting breaks than ever in the game's history."

It's true. It used to be that if a guy lost a tune-up, there went the big fight. But, recently, promoters have learned that

PHOTO BY WILL HART/GETTY IMAGES

Gatti took such a one-sided beating from Floyd Mayweather in their June 2005 junior welterweight bout that there would be no interest in a rematch if Gatti were to beat Baldomir for the title. Even so, there will be plenty of other attractive options for Gatti if he's successful in taking the 147-pound title.

PHOTO BY JONATHAN DANIEL/GETTY IMAGES

Critics have harped about the nine losses on Baldomir's record, but the win over Judah extended his current unbeaten streak to 20 bouts. During that run, Baldomir won a unanimous 12-round decision over Miguel Rodriguez, who entered the bout with a 26-1 (21) record.

with the right touch, with just the right marketing spin applied, a loss can be overcome. Morales' loss to Raheem? He'd gone up one too many weight classes. Judah collapses against Baldomir? He wasn't motivated. Gatti's destroyed by Mayweather? Well, Mayweather's the best in the world and, frankly, the fans love Gatti so much they just don't really give a damn what happened there. He's the exception.

Of course, Gatti, 40-7 (31), is not the only happy beneficiary of his leap to the front of the line. He didn't get there by accident. Baldomir and his team had a slew of guys from which to choose, Mayweather, Margarito, Ricky Hatton, maybe Shane Mosley. Why do you think they chose Gatti? Because he's the most beatable of the lot and, talk about good fortune, also brings the biggest payday. Really, it's a no-brainer, and if the news had come out that Baldomir was going to face anyone other than Gatti, especially after Gatti's win over Damgaard, it would have been a huge surprise. And a huge blunder.

Even with this perceived vulnerability, this grim acceptance that Gatti is probably the most beatable of the world's better 147-pounders, most see him as a notch above Baldomir. "Like everybody else, I'm picking Gatti to beat Baldomir for one simple reason: I didn't think much of Baldomir before the Judah fight, and nothing that happened in that bout made me change my mind," said *ShoBox* analyst and fight game veteran Steve Farhood. "Of course Gatti could lose, otherwise he wouldn't be Gatti. But Baldomir doesn't hit as hard as Thomas Damgaard, and Gatti handled him easily enough. Gatti could break a hand or bleed from a butt. Maybe he'll knock himself out by following through on an overhand right. But I can't see Baldomir doing anything to beat him."

This jives with nearly universal opinion and is difficult to dispute. When you watch him, Baldomir gives every impression of being a full notch below Gatti and his peers, particularly if you concentrate on his nine career losses, which some in the media have done. What should be considered too is that he's currently riding a 20-fight unbeaten streak. Baldomir, 42-9-6 (12), last lost a fight in December 1998. Seven of his nine losses came in his native Argentina, as have most of his wins, admittedly against no one you've heard of. That should be comforting to Gatti supporters.

What might be less reassuring are Baldomir's recent wins over Miguel Angel Rodriguez, who was 26-1 (21) at the time, or Alpaslan Aguzum, who was 29-1 (12). Hassan Al was 25-0 (12) when Baldomir oupointed him in Denmark (he also drew with him four months prior). Frank Olsen was 30-0 (19) when Baldomir stopped him in 10 rounds, also in Denmark, and Baldomir owns a November '99 disqualification win over then-undefeated Joshua Clottey in England.

We know, as Damgaard showed us against Gatti, what an undefeated record built against mostly European fighters can get you in the States, but then, so did Joe Calzaghe. Baldomir might be closer in style and talent to the former than the latter, but it's no longer safe to assume, if it ever really was, that a record built mainly in Europe is tantamount to one complied primarily in the Midwest or Southern region of the United States. And at the very least, Baldomir has shown throughout his career that he is willing to go into an opponent's backyard and come out with a win. See again what

he did to Judah in Madison Square Garden's Theater in January.

Speaking of the Judah fight, it might be worth noting too that Mayweather, for all his other-worldliness, didn't beat up Judah a whole lot more comprehensively than did Baldomir. Consider: The scores in Mayweather's win over Judah were 117-111, 116-112, and a fairly ridiculous 119-109. Baldomir outpointed Judah, on Judah's home court, 115-113, 115-112, and 114-113. Baldomir's win came by a slimmer margin, yes, but in flow was essentially the same as Mayweather's. Judah won the early rounds, wilted in the middle, and got beaten up over the second half. And we're not sure Mayweather ever hurt Judah as badly as Baldomir did with his seventh-round right cross.

Still, you could argue, as many have, that Judah's loss to Baldomir was more about what Judah wasn't rather than what Baldomir was—or is, for that matter. "I knew before Carlos fought Judah that Judah wouldn't knock him out," said longtime matchmaker Don Elbaum. "I didn't pick him to win, but I thought he'd give Judah a tough fight because of his style. He's got the kind of style that's going to give anyone a problem, and he's a tough fighter. But Gatti beats him. Gatti's not going to run around and do the stuff Judah did, because he's not that kind of fighter. He's going to stand and fight Baldomir.

"I think Baldomir is a one-fight deal," Elbaum continued. "Most of the top guys will beat him, not easily, but they'll beat him. He'll go down in history as a one- or two-fight champion."

It may turn out that way, but none of us should discount the influence of Baldomir's trainer, the great Amilcar Brusa, maybe the greatest teacher ever out of Argentina. In another era, he took Carlos Monzon to the middleweight world title and the boxing pantheon. Clearly, Baldomir is no Monzon, but, with Brusa in his corner, he upset Judah, and he won't be as big an underdog against Gatti.

For the sake of discussion, let's say the odds are right and Gatti does away with the pesky Baldomir and assumes the welterweight championship. Aside from the delirium it will cause the Atlantic City Boardwalk area, Gatti as champion—with Mayweather in the same weight class—will rankle some who won't be able to rid their minds of the pummeling Mayweather administered Gatti just a short while ago. Others will ask how THE RING can recognize Gatti as the world champion in light of Mayweather's obvious superiority.

Mayweather's win over Gatti is troubling only if you subscribe to the somewhat quaint belief that the champion must always be the division's best fighter. It is a physical impossibility that it is always so, for if it were, the champion would never be deposed. Except in cases when the champion is especially dominant, there are always contenders in the ranks and in gyms who could beat him, aided, of course, by things such as a champion's injuries or age or poor conditioning. We don't know it until they fight and the champion is beaten. Only in rare times is the champion the undisputed best in the division, and, even at that, it's almost never for very long.

You might find Mayweather's win over Gatti distracting too if you're one of those who place any weight whatever on the belt Mayweather claimed when he beat Judah. We would hope, as a reader of this magazine, you recognize that, as of this writing, Mayweather is as much the welterweight champion as he is, say, the cruiserweight champion. Or a vascular surgeon.

At any rate, if Gatti wins, should he go after Mayweather the way, say, Joe Louis did Max Schmeling? Is he under some historical mandate to do so? Short answer: Hell no. Longer answer: Are you joking?

"Why should Gatti fight Mayweather?" asked Elbaum. "Just let him fight exciting fights. Gatti-Hatton would be like a rock concert in Madison Square Garden. Put it in Europe and they'll draw 100,000. Don't worry about Mayweather. Just make good fights. Gatti will draw. Just hand-pick smart fights for him."

Farhood concurs. "After Gatti wins, he won't need to make excuses for not defending against Mayweather, who of course is the best welterweight in the world. That's because nobody will be calling for the fight. There would be more interest in Carmen Basilio-Tony DeMarco III than Mayweather-Gatti II."

But then, you never know. We might be calling for Gatti-Baldomir II. ■

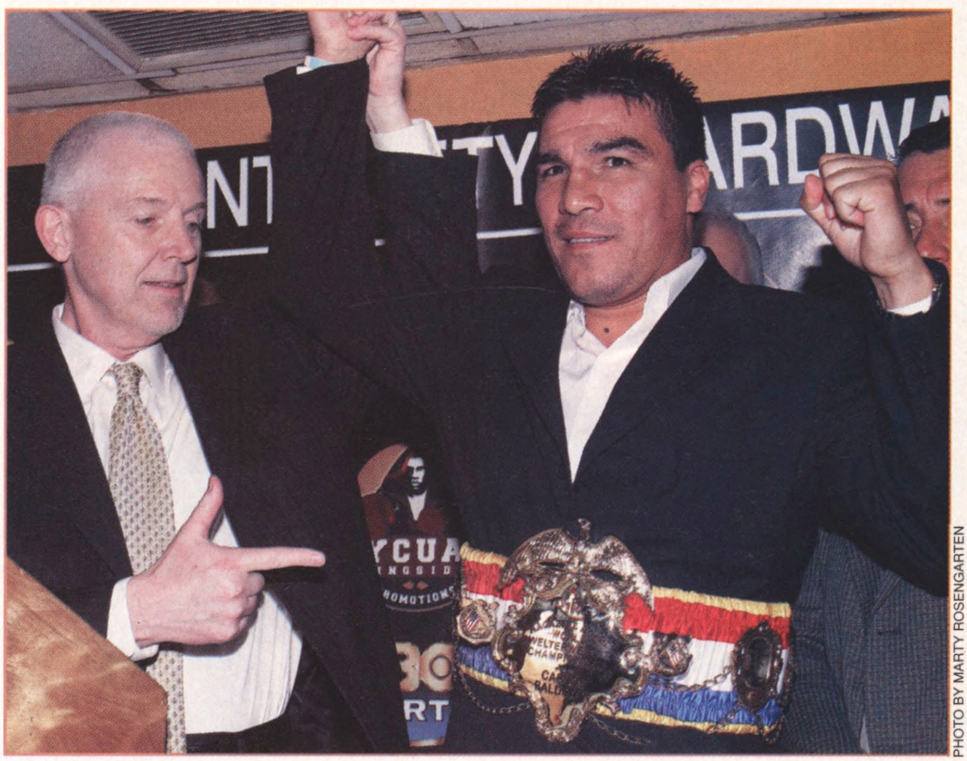
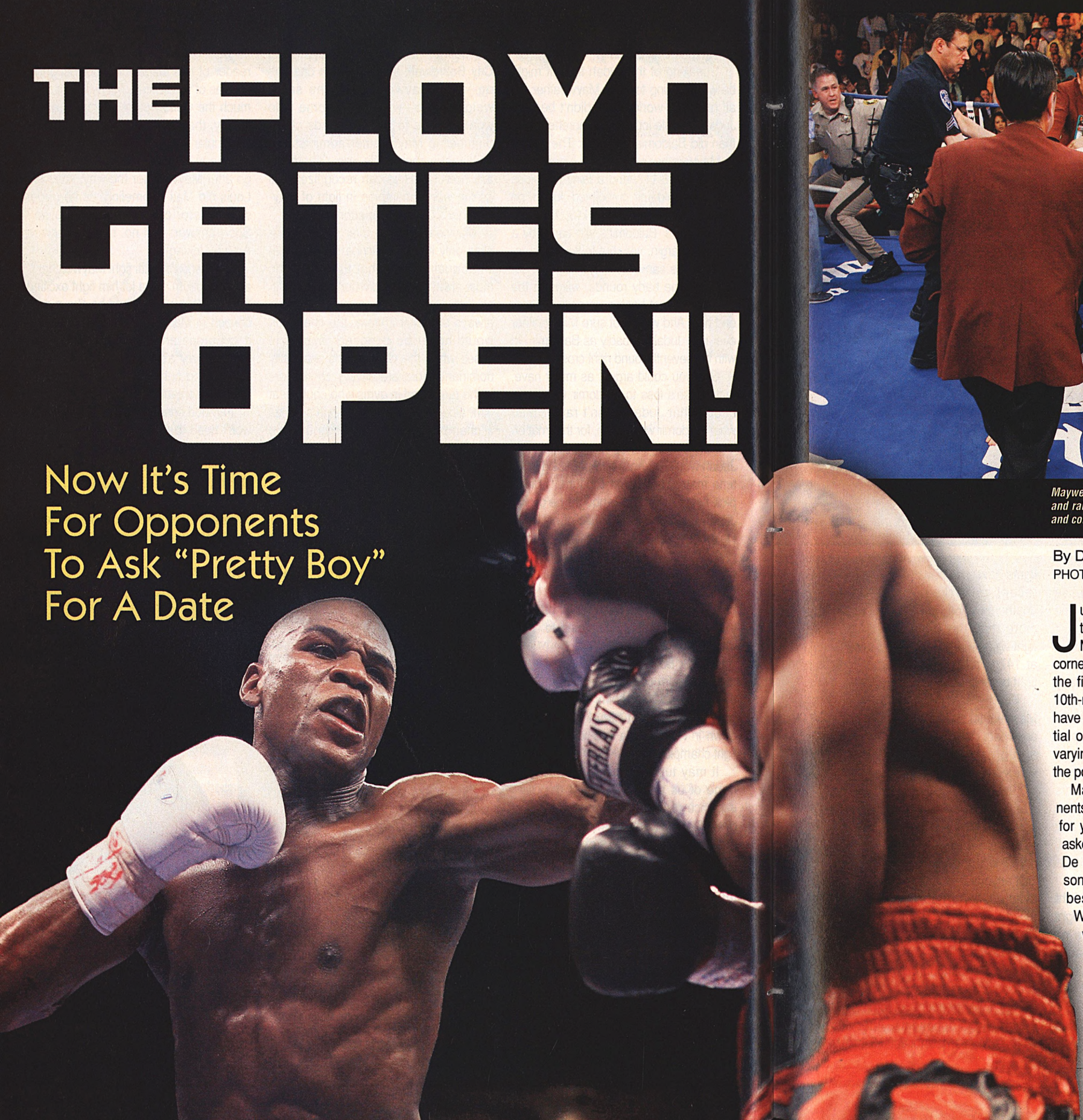


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Baldomir receives his RING welterweight world championship belt from Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins at a New York City press conference to announce his defense against Gatti. The bout will be promoted by Main Events and televised by HBO. It will be held at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall, on Gatti's home turf.

THE FLOYD GATES OPEN!

Now It's Time For Opponents To Ask "Pretty Boy" For A Date



Mayweather had overcome a slow start and was dominating with flush shots (left) when a low blow and rabbit punch from Judah in the 10th round sparked a wild free-for-all (above). It took security and commission members about five minutes to restore order and get the fight started again.

By David Mayo
PHOTOS BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Just as he did during the melee of the Zab Judah fight, today's Floyd Mayweather stands calmly in the corner as the flurry swirls around him. In the figurative application of the literal 10th-round drama, it just as easily could have been Mayweather's A-list of potential opponents clawing each other, to varying degrees, to knock that zero off the pound-for-pound king's record.

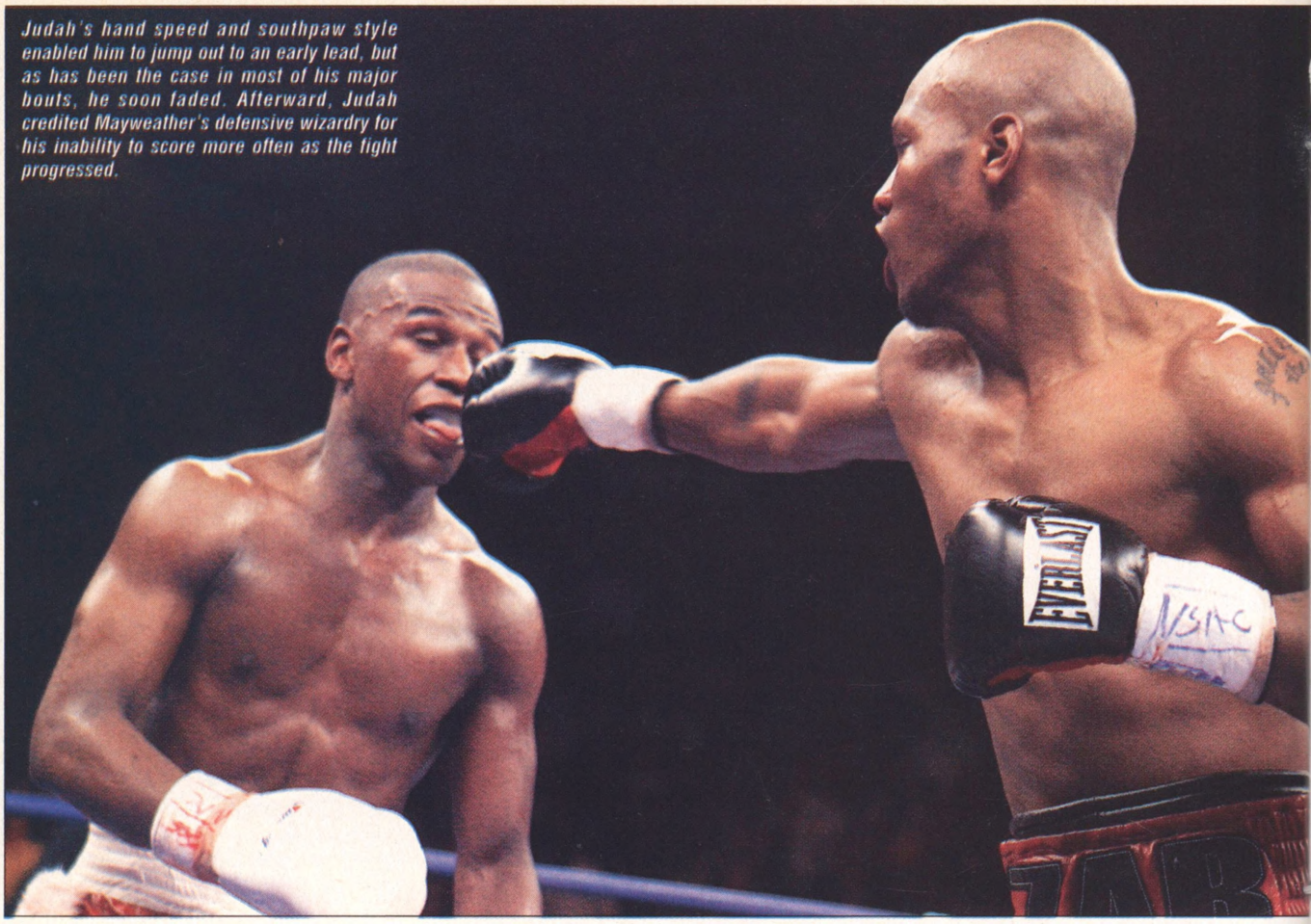
Mayweather doesn't call out opponents anymore. He did so exhaustively for years, but Shane Mosley's father asked for an eight-figure purse, Oscar De La Hoya said fighting his trainer's son was unthinkable, Ricky Hatton's best answer was someday, Winky Wright was too big. And Mayweather, working under the constraints of an HBO contract and the restraints of the law, kept himself just enough out of favor as to be avoidable to all potential big-name foes except Diego Corrales and Arturo Gatti.

Oh, how opinions change.

There are no legitimate contenders within seven pounds either direction of Mayweather with a justifiable reason for not fighting him now, save for the short list of those he already has beaten, and the shorter list of potential De La Hoya opponents. That is Mayweather's position—minus the De La Hoya factor, of course—and increasingly, that of the boxing public.

Judah became the first man to control the early rounds against Mayweather, just as Jose Luis Castillo remains the only man to control the late rounds against him, and, in the pursuit of someone to put together a full 12, the opponents are lining up as surely as the pay-per-view numbers, which actually favored Mayweather-Judah over last year's Mayweather-Gatti by a small margin.

Mayweather "won't be fighting on HBO," his promoter, Bob Arum, said, and while there might be some occasion when that proves hyperbolic, the Top Rank corporate position, until its contract with Mayweather expires after 2007, is



Judah's hand speed and southpaw style enabled him to jump out to an early lead, but as has been the case in most of his major bouts, he soon faded. Afterward, Judah credited Mayweather's defensive wizardry for his inability to score more often as the fight progressed.

only big fights, only big arenas, only pay-per-view television.

The answers of the potential opponents have changed too. Most notably, De La Hoya has said on multiple occasions over the last year that he has resolved the unseemly conflict of fighting Floyd Mayweather Sr.'s son, and the trainer says he'll be there to beat his namesake if "The Golden Boy vs. Pretty Boy" should occur.

But Mayweather's options don't end with De La Hoya, whom he used to treat as his end-all dream opponent, but hardly mentions now. Hatton signed a three-fight HBO contract designed to conclude with a Mayweather fight, Mosley now acknowledges all roads go through Mayweather, and if Wright or linear welterweight champion Carlos Baldomir are still standing after all that sorts out, they might get a piece too.

Mayweather rarely if ever uttered the names of potential opponents either before or after his April 8 win over Judah at Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas, a fight remembered for the 10th-round brawl that earned his uncle and trainer Roger Mayweather a one-year license revocation and $200,000 fine from the Nevada State Athletic Commission.

First in line could be Antonio Margarito on July 29 at Thomas & Mack Center, but that fight was only in early talking stages at press time, and Mayweather's complete refusal to address future opponents left his personal wishes unusually shielded.

De La Hoya remains a primary target, however, and, if his recent statements approving Mayweather as a potential opponent are more than baiting, any obstacles to the fight could be alleviated, according to Leonard Ellerbe, Mayweather's longtime adviser and friend.

"If Oscar is willing to step up and fight Floyd, we'll fight him at whatever weight he's comfortable with, so there are no excuses," Ellerbe said. "Oscar is a man of his word. But he has a tough fight in front of him on May 6. It's not a given that he's going to beat Ricardo Mayorga."

Yet if the recent Mayweather-Judah and Manny Pacquiao-Erik Morales fights have taught us anything, it is that recent setbacks aren't necessarily anathema to pay-per-view success, any more than the issue of De La Hoya fighting at 154 pounds and Mayweather at 147 is an impediment to a potential fight between them.

Ellerbe said, in the right situation, Mayweather would be willing to fluctuate anywhere between 140 and 154 pounds as fights with historic significance emerge.

"Who says he has to weigh 154?" when fighting at junior middleweight, Ellerbe said. "Floyd can change weight divisions as the situation dictates. The name of the game is skills. And there isn't anyone in any of those three weight divisions who has the skills to beat Floyd—not one."

Weight would seem the one variable most likely to mar Mayweather's 36-0 (24) record, although it also requires a special athlete with the ability to counteract his ability to outfox, outbox, and outpunch all his opponents. After Judah, 34-4 (25), seemed to establish such a

pace over the first four rounds—despite judge Glen Hamada giving all four rounds to Mayweather—he found himself bloodied from the nose and mouth, wearied by a persistent body assault, and walked down by a superior fighter from rounds five through 11. Judah lost by scores of 116-112 (Dave Moretti), 117-111 (Jerry Roth), and Hamada's questionable 119-111.

Judah did not conduct any prefight interviews, blew off an international teleconference, engaged in disruptive shouting and scuffling matches at both the final press conference and weigh-in, and generally raised questions about his fitness for the task after losing the legitimate welterweight title in January to Carlos Baldomir. Judah got the Mayweather fight anyway, in part because both Arum and Don King thought they could market it as a hip-hop attraction, and in part because Judah owed both a seven-figure debt to King and unspecified back taxes to the Internal Revenue Service.

As to the fitness question, Judah acquitted himself admirably from the opening bell until he fired an excruciatingly low blow with 10 seconds remaining in the 10th round. Judah denied throwing the low blow intentionally, even though he followed it with a rabbit punch, and when referee Richard Steele called time with five seconds remaining, Roger Mayweather entered the ring and an ugly display ensued.

"It's just two fighters in there," Judah said. "Everybody's emotionally involved in this whole thing. But when somebody takes it upon themselves, from the outside, to come in and make their own consequences, I don't think that's the right thing to do."

The hip-hop angle worked too, even if Mayweather rarely played into it (for the first time in seven years, he didn't wear "Philthy Rich Records" logos into the ring). The PPV drew 350,000 buys and generated $15.7-million in revenue, slightly exceeding Mayweather's 2005 fight against the ever-popular Gatti (340,000, $15.3-million), despite Judah coming off a bad loss. The numbers fueled the long-simmering belief that Mayweather could become a crossover pay-per-view star, even if the Judah fight was pinpointed to a more specific audience. The fight also attracted a large live crowd of 15,170 to Thomas & Mack.

"I believe people in the urban, African-American market appreciate someone's brilliance, whatever they do," said Todd duBoef, Top Rank's president. "Whether it's Denzel Washington as an actor, P. Diddy as a musician, or Floyd as a fighter, they appreciate brilliance. There was just an outpouring of response to see Floyd perform. It's like seeing Louis Armstrong perform. That's how they look at it."

King also was pleased that the fight held its attraction with the buying public despite Judah's loss to Baldomir. "I look at it like the Chinese." he said. "The lotus grows out of the dung, but look at the flower." King was less pleased that his pursuit of a Mayweather disqualification, because of Roger Mayweather's actions, was unsuccessful.

King's public acknowledgment that Judah owed him a seven-figure debt, piled upon the tax woes, could not have helped Judah before the fight. Neither did the withholding of Judah's purse pending final commission ruling afterward. The purse was $1-million, although

After solving Judah's style, Mayweather zeroed in with precision punches, bloodying his rival's nose and swelling the area around his right eye. It looked like "Pretty Boy" might stop Judah, but the two fouls and the ensuing rumble pretty much ended any chance of a kayo.

Judah was only to receive $250,000 of that, according to contracts filed with the Nevada commission.

"If this fight goes through the roof, and Zab makes enough to pay me the money I loaned him, I don't think I'd even have to argue about that, he'll pay me," King said. "Because why wouldn't you pay a bank that let you have money with no collateral, and no future really, other than what I believed you could do? Then, when you win it, you pay it back. There's an obligation to pay the loan back."

Mayweather, who has flirted with the idea of working with King over the years, chilled at the remarks.

"I don't like that King is out there telling his business," Mayweather said. "King is the one telling people Zab is in the hole with him. He's telling Zab's personal business, starting after the Baldomir fight, when Zab disrespected his promoter on TV, and King said he didn't understand why Zab was acting like that, because he was a million in the hole to him.

"The biggest mistake Zab has made in his career is leaving Shelly Finkel to go with Don. I can't see how you would do that. It's like trying to get into a room that everyone is trying to get out of. It's like a

UNCLE ROGER PAYS THE PRICE

Roger Mayweather rarely lacks a personal template for even the oddest ring occurrences. So in the aftermath of a melee that netted him the second-largest fine in Nevada history, Mayweather quickly flashed back to when his own trainer lost composure in a title fight and got kicked out of his corner.

When Mayweather and Julio Cesar Chavez scuffled at the end of the seventh round of their 1989 rematch, Jesse Reid charged into the ring, grabbed Chavez by the waist and shoved him away.

But Reid's ejection ended the extracurriculars that night, in contrast to the brawl Mayweather instigated by leaving the corner late in the 10th round of the Floyd Mayweather-Zab Judah fight, costing him a $200,000 fine and one-year license revocation.

"I've been in boxing so long that a lot of things that happen, when I look back over my career, they remind me of things that happened before," Mayweather said, brightening momentarily at a 17-year-old memory, on an otherwise gloomy afternoon after the Nevada Athletic Commission dropped the hammer.

Mike Tyson's $3-million fine for orally assaulting Evander Holyfield in 1997 is the only larger fine levied by the commission, which at press time was investigating more possible sanctions against members of both camps, including Judah and his father and trainer Yoel, and Mayweather adviser and cornerman Leonard Ellerbe.

Roger Mayweather, in addition to being fined his entire portion of his nephew's purse, may not work corners in any U.S. jurisdiction until at least April 14, 2007, and even then must plead to the commission to lift the revocation.

"The penalty is severe, but his actions were severe," said Top Rank President Todd duBoef. "I feel sorry for Roger because I don't think he intended this problem, and I think he is largely embarrassed."

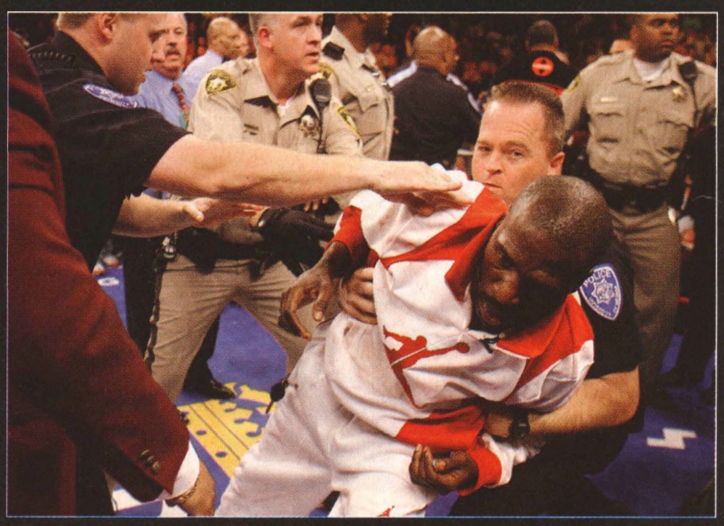
The 45-year-old two-time former titleholder said he entered the ring because he thought the 10th round had ended after Judah landed a low blow and Steele stopped the clock with five seconds left. "In the same situation, I could not do anything different than what I did, because I thought the round was over," he said.

Roger Mayweather entered the ring, followed seconds later by Yoel Judah. As the trainers squared off, Zab Judah punched Ellerbe in the back of the head, then grappled with Roger Mayweather.

Zab Judah expressed innocence, saying he was restrained by police and "proceeded to get choked by Roger Mayweather."

"All I did was ask him why he threw the low blow," Roger said. "I didn't fire at him. He swung at me."

Another flashback: Roger Mayweather manhandled Vinny Pazienza in a 1988 fight punctuated by several after-the-bell exchanges. When the 12th round ended the same way, Lou Duva stormed out of Pazienza's corner and Mayweather sliced the 65-year-old trainer's cheek with an uppercut. Afterward, Mayweather gave up part of his purse to pay back taxes.

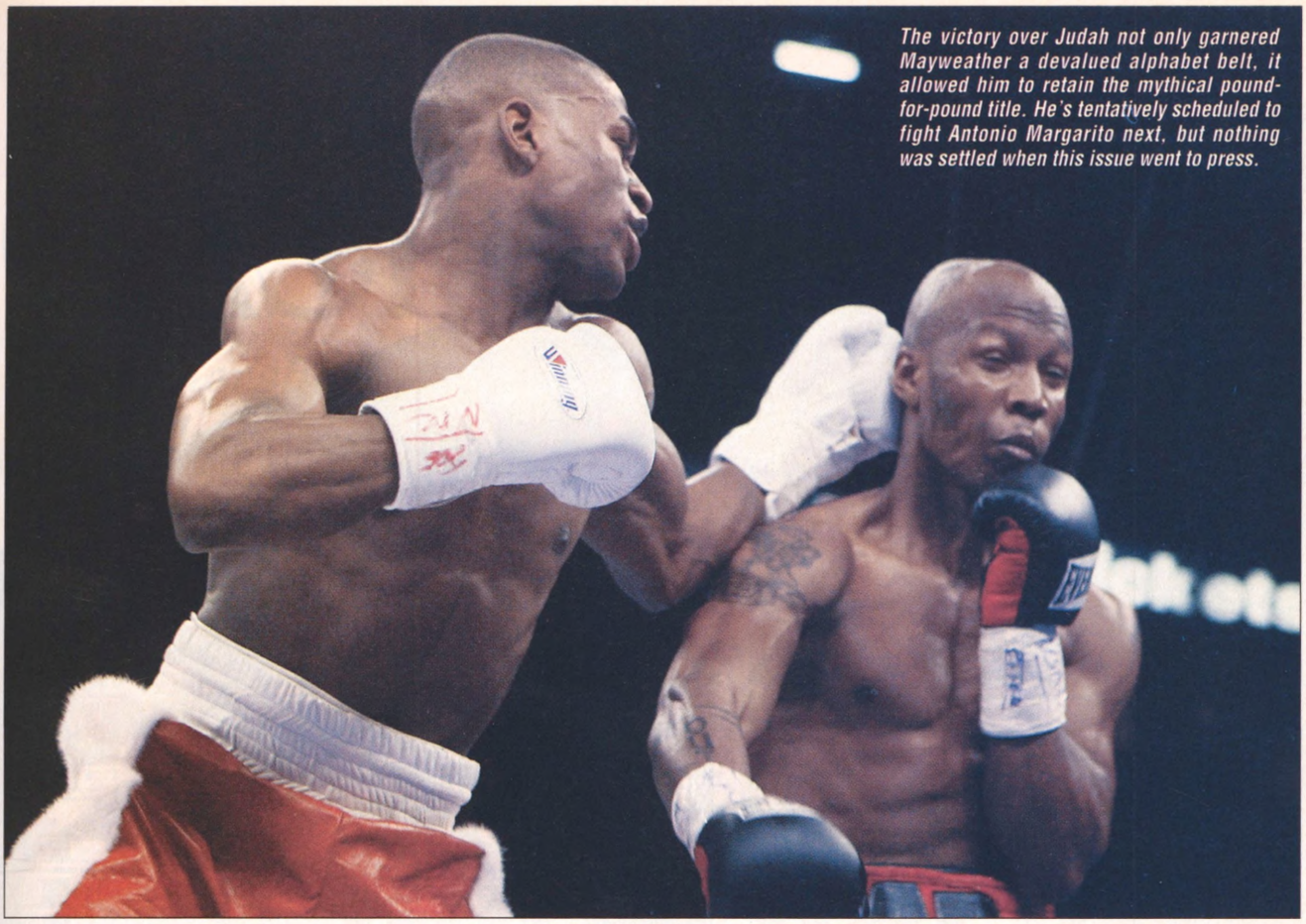


Police and security guards subdue Uncle Roger

Likewise, Judah, who had Internal Revenue Service agents nipping while Nevada withheld his purse, didn't wait for an explanation when an opposing trainer charged.

"I'm not saying anything that happened was a good thing," Mayweather said, "but whatever the case may be, they took my money, and they're going to take his money too. We both worked for nothing. That's boxing."

—D.M.



The victory over Judah not only garnered Mayweather a devalued alphabet belt, it allowed him to retain the mythical pound-for-pound title. He's tentatively scheduled to fight Antonio Margarito next, but nothing was settled when this issue went to press.

smoky room with a lock on it that everybody's trying to get out of, and Zab's trying to get in. It doesn't make any sense."

Mayweather occupies the room everyone from 140 to 154 pounds with the slightest bit of self-respect wants to enter, and the opinions about his potential opponents' chances are swirling as surely as the illegal activity he watched with such indifference during the 10th round against Judah.

Larry Merchant, the HBO analyst, said Margarito and Hatton "are the kind of hard-punching, pressure fighters who can give a boxer like Mayweather the most trouble."

James Toney, peering down from his chins, said De La Hoya is in trouble if he dares enter the ring with Mayweather. "I think Mayweather beats him," Toney said. "I'm being real with you. This is a different era than six or seven years ago. When De La Hoya is in with a real fighter, like he was with Bernard Hopkins, he folds."

There are obstacles to fights with all Mayweather's potential opponents. De La Hoya has the immediate threat of Mayorga. Hatton might end up fighting Gatti in an explosive second fight of his three-fight HBO package. Wright's impending middleweight title fight with Jermain Taylor could alter his direction to weightier concerns. As for Mosley, whom Mayweather would have liked fighting before he was devalued by defeat, the dollars will determine if it makes sense.

"Don't know who we're going to fight next," Mayweather said. "I've got a good team, and I let them handle that. I just want to bring the fans exciting fights. Not all of my interviews are the best, not all of my fights are the best. But 90 percent of the time, I make exciting fights. That, and staying undefeated, are what's important to me in boxing."

But heart to heart, deep down inside, who does Mayweather really want?

"Heart to heart? It don't matter," he said, slipping deftly. "You've seen me call a thousand opponents out, every time I fight. It's time for fighters to call me out. That's why I'm in this position."

His new representatives at the William Morris Agency couldn't have scripted the answers any better, even if they provide little enlightenment for boxing fans.

Neither could his promoter, who for years, has told Mayweather the best way to get the big fights and big purses is to quit chasing them.

"I don't think he was mature enough to do it before," Arum said. "Now he understands, and he's acting like a business guy."

His closest friend and adviser, who insists Mayweather can dominate three weight divisions simultaneously in Henry Armstrong fashion, said the marketability and ability of a potentially rare sports commodity finally are about to catch up with each other.

"The fights are all lined up, big fights, pay-per-view fights," Ellerbe said. "Margarito, Oscar, Ricky Hatton, Shane Mosley, it doesn't matter. They all have to go through Floyd. This is the second part of Floyd's career. In this part, he takes off both inside the ring and outside." ■

David Mayo covers boxing for the Grand Rapid (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOXWOODS

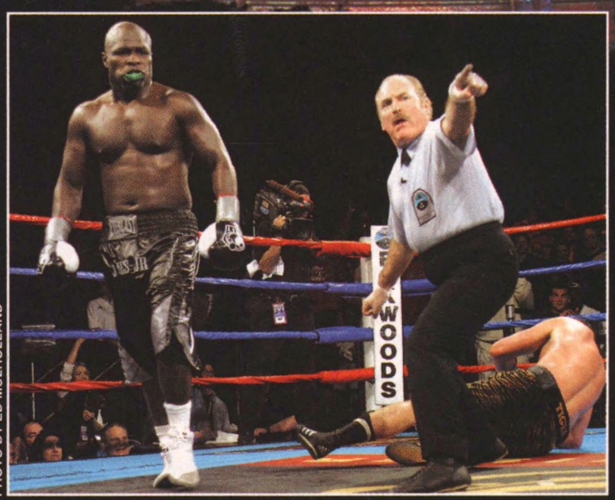


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Like a storybook castle emerging from the New England woodland, Foxwoods is the leader among Native-American casinos that feature boxing. It has been the site of many outstanding bouts, including James Toney's thrilling victory over Vassiliy Jirov in 2003 for the IBF cruiserweight belt (inset).

NATIVE-AMERICAN CASINOS & BOXING

A Partnership That Changed The Sport's Landscape

By Don Stradley

On April 23, 1992, heavyweight contender Tommy Morrison stopped a journeyman named Kimmual Odum in three rounds as the main event of an ESPN show. On the undercard, Peter McNeeley improved his record to 6-0 (6). This mediocre night of boxing was significant in that it was the first boxing show hosted by Foxwoods Casino in Mashantucket, Connecticut. Since that first night, Foxwoods has hosted nearly 100 boxing events, inspiring a wave of Native-American owned casinos that would impact boxing to this day.

"It's a phenomenon," said *ShoBox* commentator Steve Farhood. "Indian casinos have given a home to mid-level fights. And they bring live boxing to a lot of people who otherwise might not see it since a lot of these casinos are in the middle of nowhere."

Ledyard, Connecticut, is in the middle of nowhere, but because of the Pequot tribe, it's become home to one of the biggest gambling centers in the world.

In 1987, the Supreme Court established that by nature of their sovereign political status, federally recognized Native-American tribes could operate casinos free of state regulations. The Pequots opened a high-stakes bingo hall in 1986, and, in 1992, the tribe opened the Foxwoods Resort Casino. The project was bankrolled by 85-year-old Chinese billionaire Lim Goh Tong, who not only collects interest on a $235-million loan to the Pequots, but also takes 10 percent of Foxwoods' net income until 2018.

In its early days, Foxwoods was a drab place with old, disgusting carpets and a slot-playing clientele that fit the motif. But, in time, Foxwoods developed its own quirky reputation. Some travelers on their way to gamble would stop by Salvatore Verdirome's "Sanctuary Of Love," a three-acre lot in nearby Greeneville decorated with religious statues where they would pray for luck. The waitresses in squaw attire became Foxwoods' campy trademark, as did the gaudy statue of The Rainmaker, an Indian hunter aiming an arrow into the sky, intent on bringing down a rainstorm of wealth. The Rainmaker worked, bringing not only financial success to the casino, but also a number of big fights, including Roy Jones-Montell Griffin II, James Toney-Vassiliy Jirov, and

PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

The Mohegan Sun (left) a Native-American casino in Uncasville, Connecticut, has a 10,000-seat arena (above) that is perfect for boxing. It was the site of the first Micky Ward-Arturo Gatti fight.

"itching to hit someone." Vinny Paz once made some heated comments about the scoring of a fight, and was banned from Foxwoods for nearly four years. In 1996, Butterbean found himself in trouble for breaking one of Foxwoods' most stringent rules: He was chewing gum in his dressing room. The tribal commission told Butterbean to remove his gum because they feared "it could be laced with a performance enhancing substance."

Media members have also struggled with Foxwoods' our-way-or-the-highway attitude. Ron Borges of *The Boston Globe* said, "Foxwoods used to be five trailers in the middle of the woods. They weren't friendly then, and nothing has changed. They don't know what a press credential means. They act like I'm trying to pass a phony urine sample to one of the fighters."

Despite Foxwoods' reputation, promoter Jimmy Burchfield considers it a class organization. "It's an honor to promote fights there," said Burchfield. "In casinos, there will always be characters who are trying to get away with something. The commission has rules and regulations in place for the protection of everyone in the casino. They have an image to protect. They don't take anyone's baloney."

Burchfield's fondness for Foxwoods could be because of its role in his promotions. "They take care of everything, from advertising to putting up the ring," he said. "If I put on a show at a regular sports arena, I don't get any help. But the casino treats the fight as if they're bringing in a headline entertainer. They put in a tremendous effort to help it succeed. Being in the boxing business, I appreciate that. I'll say the same for Mohegan Sun, another class operation. I have great respect for both."

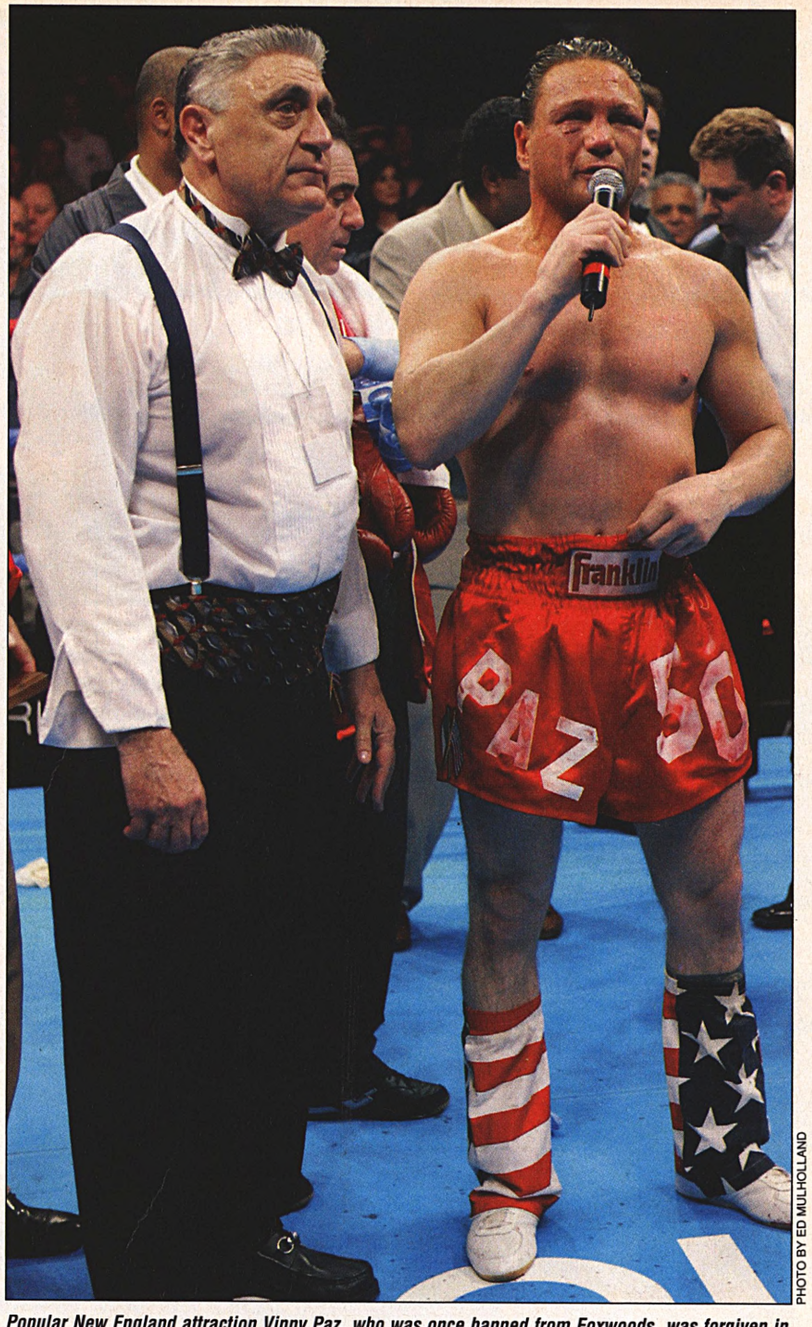


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Popular New England attraction Vinny Paz, who was once banned from Foxwoods, was forgiven in time to have his 50th and final fight there, in March 2004. That's Jimmy Burchfield with Paz, a promoter who has staged many cards at Foxwoods.

Across the Massapequotuck River in nearby Uncasville, Connecticut, is the Mohegan Sun Casino, opened in 1996. This casino has hosted 45 boxing shows since its inception, the high-water mark being the first Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward fight, in 2002. Solomon Kerzner, who took advantage of South African apartheid to build the Sun City resort in 1979 and was later involved in a money scandal that caused the resignation of Transkeian Prime Minister George Matanzima, was the main mover behind the birth of Mohegan Sun. So far the Uncasville casino hasn't suffered from his shady reputation, although Kerzner and his partners worked out a generous package allowing them to walk away with 40 percent of the Sun's net revenues. Kerzner is reportedly planning another casino on tribal land in Wisconsin.

Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun remain the Godzilla and King Kong of Native-American casinos, paying a percentage of their revenue to Connecticut to ensure no other casinos are built in the state. They were also among the first casinos to

Diego Corrales-Acelino Freitas.

But things didn't always run smoothly. Many fighters were unhappy after being caught in the casino's web of paperwork and regulations. A misstep could get you bounced from the building, whether you were Lou DiBella or a fighter's mother. Former employees recall thuggish security guards

appoint their own athletic commissions.

"The tribal commissions are doing a fine job of regulating," said Tim Lueckenhoff, president of the Association of Boxing Commissions. "Of the dozen tribal commissions that are members of the ABC, most have reached out to the ABC membership for guidance."

Naturally, problems arise when a tribal group seemingly "recedes from the union." When the Miccosukee tribe of Florida created its own commission, the Florida State Commission threatened to fire officials who turned down state assignments in order to work for the tribe. The Florida Commission also attempted to tax boxing promoters who put on matches on the Miccosukee reservation. The tribe filed suit against the state commission in 2000, but the Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed the Miccosukees' complaint. "The tax issue is the major problem between states and tribes," said Lueckenhoff. "I have encouraged those state commissions who are asked to regulate on tribal land or are approaching tribes about regulation that a set fee be agreed upon to get around the tax issue.

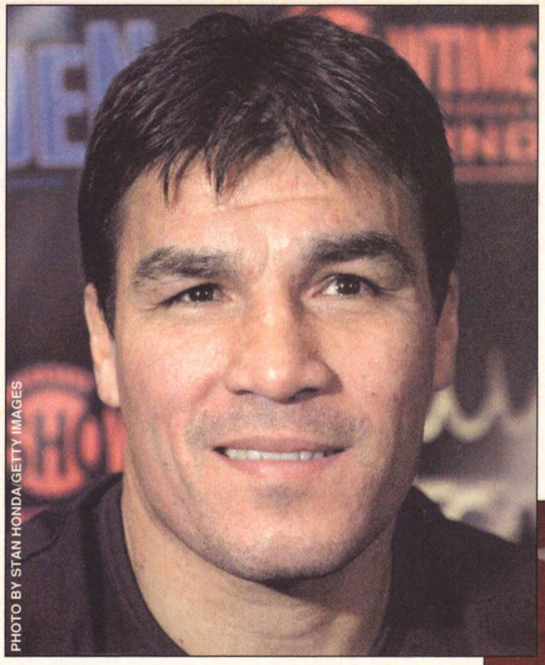


PHOTO BY STAN HONDA/GETTY IMAGES

Fighters such as Carlos Baldomir (left) and Joan Guzman (below) are promoted by Sycuan Ringside Promotions, an offshoot of the Sycuan Resort Casino in El Cajon, California.

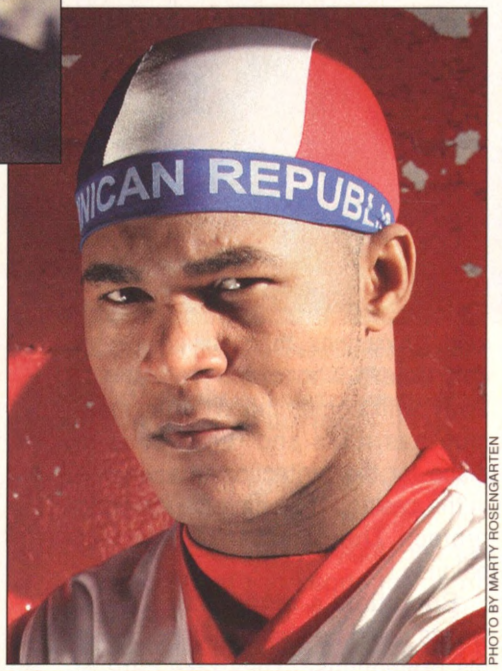


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

"There are some states that have an excellent relationship with the tribal commissions and they work hand in hand to regulate boxing. However, there are instances where the state and tribal commission just cannot come to an agreement, which causes friction."

* * *

If you were looking for the polar opposite of the Connecticut

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Boxing at Native-American casinos frequently brings the Sweet Science to locations where fans don't usually see fights, such as the Chinook Winds in Lincoln City, Oregon. James Toney knocked out Michael Rush at Chinook Winds in May 2002.

casinos, you could try Fantasy Springs in Indio, California. It's the place where Hector Camacho Jr. rode to the ring on a camel; it's where fights are held outdoors in 124-degree temperatures and during the freezing winter months with a ring plunked down behind the casino and chairs set up haphazardly in the sand; it's where hordes of sand flies bombard the audience. And on December 18, 1999, it's where Isidro Garcia stepped out of the audience to win a title.

The main event that night was supposed to be a flyweight title fight between WBO titlist Jose Lopez and Alejandro Montiel. When Montiel pulled out, desperate promoters noticed flyweight Garcia in the audience and asked him to substitute. Using a borrowed mouthguard, protector, and trunks, Garcia won the title via unanimous decision.

How Garcia weighed exactly 112 pounds that day may have been a lucky coincidence (he hadn't fought in two months, and was reportedly eating a donut at ringside before being approached) or slight-of-hand on the part of desperate promoters. But even if Garcia had legitimately weighed 112 (ringside observers guessed him to be at least 12 pounds over the weight limit), how did he merit a title shot? Such is the magic of Fantasy Springs.

California casinos generate over $6-billion annually. "The California

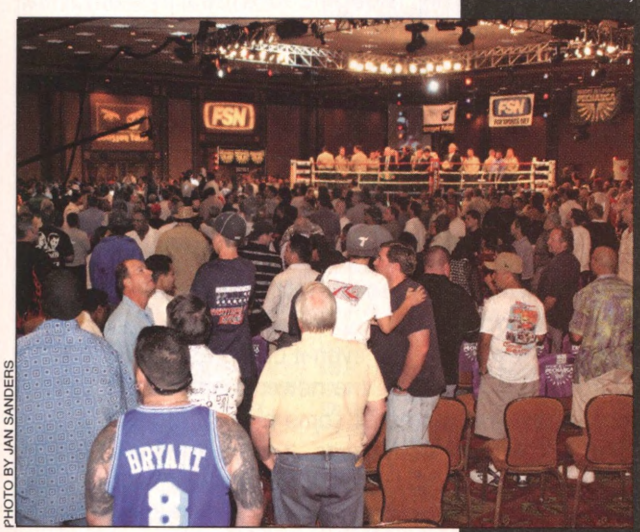


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Fans cluster around the ring at Pechanga Resort in Temecula, California

THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG?

Here is a list of Native-American casinos that have hosted boxing since 2004. Casinos that haven't featured boxing in recent years were omitted. An asterisk denotes casinos with their own tribal commission.

- Desert Diamond Casino, Tucson, AZ
- Apache Gold Casino, San Carlos, AZ
- Casino Del Sol, Tucson, AZ
- Fort McDowell Casino, Fountain Hills, AZ*
- Agua Caliente Hotel Casino, Rancho Mirage, CA
- Feather Falls Casino, Oroville, CA
- Palace Indian Gaming Center, Lemoore, CA
- Tachi Palace Casino, Lemoore, CA
- Fantasy Springs, Indio, CA
- Chumash Casino, St. Ynez, CA
- Pechanga Resort and Casino, Temecula, CA
- Golden Acorn Casino, Campo, CA
- Cache Creek Casino, Brooks, CA
- Morongo Casino, Cabazon, CA
- Elk Valley Casino, Crescent City, CA
- Sycuan Resort & Casino, EL Cajon, CA
- San Manual Indian Casino, Highland, CA
- Sky Ute Casino, Ignacio, CO*
- Gold Rush Casino, Cripple Creek, CO
- Mountain High Casino, Black Hawk, Colorado
- Foxwoods Resort Casino, Mashantucket, CT*
- Mohegan Sun Casino, Uncasville, CT*
- Seminole Hard Rock Casino, Hollywood, FL
- Miccosukee Indian Gaming, Miami, FL*
- Coeur D'Alene Casino, Worley, ID
- Clearwater River Casino, Lewiston, ID
- Grand Victoria Casino, Rising Sun, IN
- Majestic Star Casino, Gary, IN
- Casino Aztar, Evansville, IN
- Caesars Casino, Elizabeth, IN
- Prairie Meadows Casino, Altoona, IA
- Coushatta Casino & Resort, Kinder, LA
- Argosy Casino, Baton Rouge, LA
- Paragon Casino, Marksville, LA
- Isle of Capri Casino, Bossier City, LA
- Kewadin Casino, Sault Ste. Marie, MI
- Salt Tribe's Greektown Casino, Detroit, MI
- Little River Casino Resort, Manistee, MI
- Seven Clans Casino, Thief River Falls, MN
- Grand Casino Hinckley, Hinckley, MN
- Shooting Star Casino, Mahnomen, MN
- Fitzgerald's Casino, Tunica, MS
- Silver Star Hotel & Casino, Choctaw, MS*
- Hampton Beach Casino, Hampton Beach, NH
- San Felipe's Casino Hollywood, Albuquerque, NM
- Santa Ana Star Casino, Bernalillo, NM
- Isleta Resort & Casino, Albuquerque, NM
- Turning Stone Casino, Verona, NY
- Buffalo Run Casino, Miami, OK
- Thunderbird Wild West Casino, Norman, OK*
- Chinook Winds Casino Resort, Lincoln City, OR*
- Seven Feathers Resort, Canyonville, OR
- Kickapoo Lucky Eagle Casino, Eagle Pass, TX*
- Speaking Rock Casino, El Paso, TX
- The Lucky Eagle Casino, Rochester, WA
- Yakama Legends Casino, Toppenish, WA*
- Emerald Queen Casino, Tacoma, WA
- Northern Lights Casino, Anacortes, WA
- Northern Quest Casino, Airway Heights, WA
- Quinault Resort & Casino, Ocean Shores, WA
- Silver Reef Casino, Ferndale, WA
- Swinomish Northern Lights Casino, Anacortes, WA
- Mohican North Star Casino, Bowler, WI

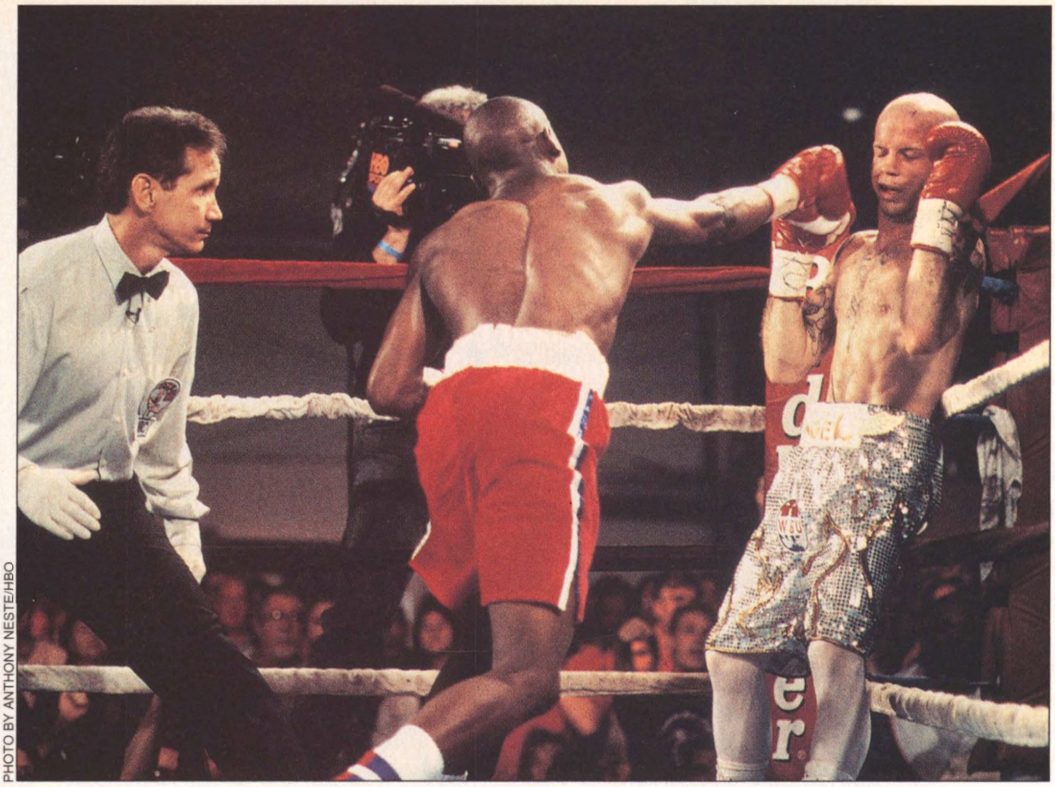


PHOTO BY ANTHONY NESTE/HBO

In 1998, the Miccosukee Tribe sponsored 16 boxing shows, including Floyd Mayweather's kayo of Angel Manfredy (pictured), but like many casinos, they have cut down the number of boxing events they stage.

casinos feed Vegas in that people who have never been exposed to gambling might want to see how it's done in the big leagues. But they also provide a fun night out for people who never intend to go to Vegas. We've done 10 shows at Chumash," said Farhood, referring to the Chumash Casino in Santa Ynez, California. "Every single show was sold out."

Sycuan Ringside Promotions has taken casino boxing to the next, perhaps obvious, step. An offshoot of the Sycuan Resort Casino in El Cajon, California, SRP has started promoting a small stable of fighters. "There could be a conflict of interest there," said Burchfield. "They might also realize that promoting is a tough, time-consuming business."

Sycuan Vice President Mike Marley said there are no problems. "If you recall, Steve Wynn was the promoter for Buster Douglas when Wynn's Mirage hotel-casino hosted the Douglas-Holyfield heavyweight title bout. I see no conflict of interest with what Sycuan is doing. Sycuan Ringside Promotions is just a small part of many businesses, other than gaming, that the tribe owns and operates. Boxers such as Joan Guzman, Carlos Baldomir, and Julio Diaz felt abused or unappreciated by other promoters, but have prospered under the Sycuan banner."

"Venues being promoters is as old as can be," added Farhood. "Madison Square Garden is a prime example. Warrior's Boxing in Florida, in league with the Hard Rock, is also doing it. We might see even more of it. These casinos, even the smaller ones, are making more money than they know what to do with. Gambling is the vice of the new millennium."

Foxwoods has certainly cashed in on America's gambling addiction, attracting an estimated 40,000 people each day. In 2005, they announced plans to build a casino in the Virgin Islands. But even as Foxwoods expands, they are presenting fewer fights. During the period from 1994 to 1999, Foxwoods hosted 54 boxing shows; from 2000 to 2005, the number dropped to 34. The reason is that boxing cuts into Foxwoods' lucrative bingo schedule. Foxwoods once welcomed the exposure boxing gave them, but they've become such a monolith that breaking up a bingo night for boxing results in a financial loss.

"In the future, Foxwoods will only do big fights," said Burchfield. "They're not interested in clubfights."

Foxwoods isn't alone in their cutbacks. The Miccosukees hosted 16 boxing events in 1998. Last year, they hosted four. Fantasy Springs went from nine fights in 1998 to only one in the past four years.

In a way, this golden era of casino boxing is comparable to the TV boxing boom of the 1950s, or the cable boom of the 1980s. Boxing came in handy when fledgling networks needed programming. When the networks developed other programming, boxing was brushed aside. The casinos are following the same cycle—boxing was a good fit for a while, but the tribes have found greater success with golf courses, restaurants, and shopping malls.

Native-American Casino boxing is by no means dead. With 107 federally recognized tribes in California alone, many of them pushing for their own casinos, there will be plenty of new venues opening in the next several years. Gary Garrison, a spokesman for the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, said the new casinos "have to be the biggest and the brightest and the best. You're seeing an acceleration, just like an arms race."

So even if older casinos are cutting back, the newer casinos will probably present some boxing, at least in their early years. If not, boxing will need to find its own Rainmaker. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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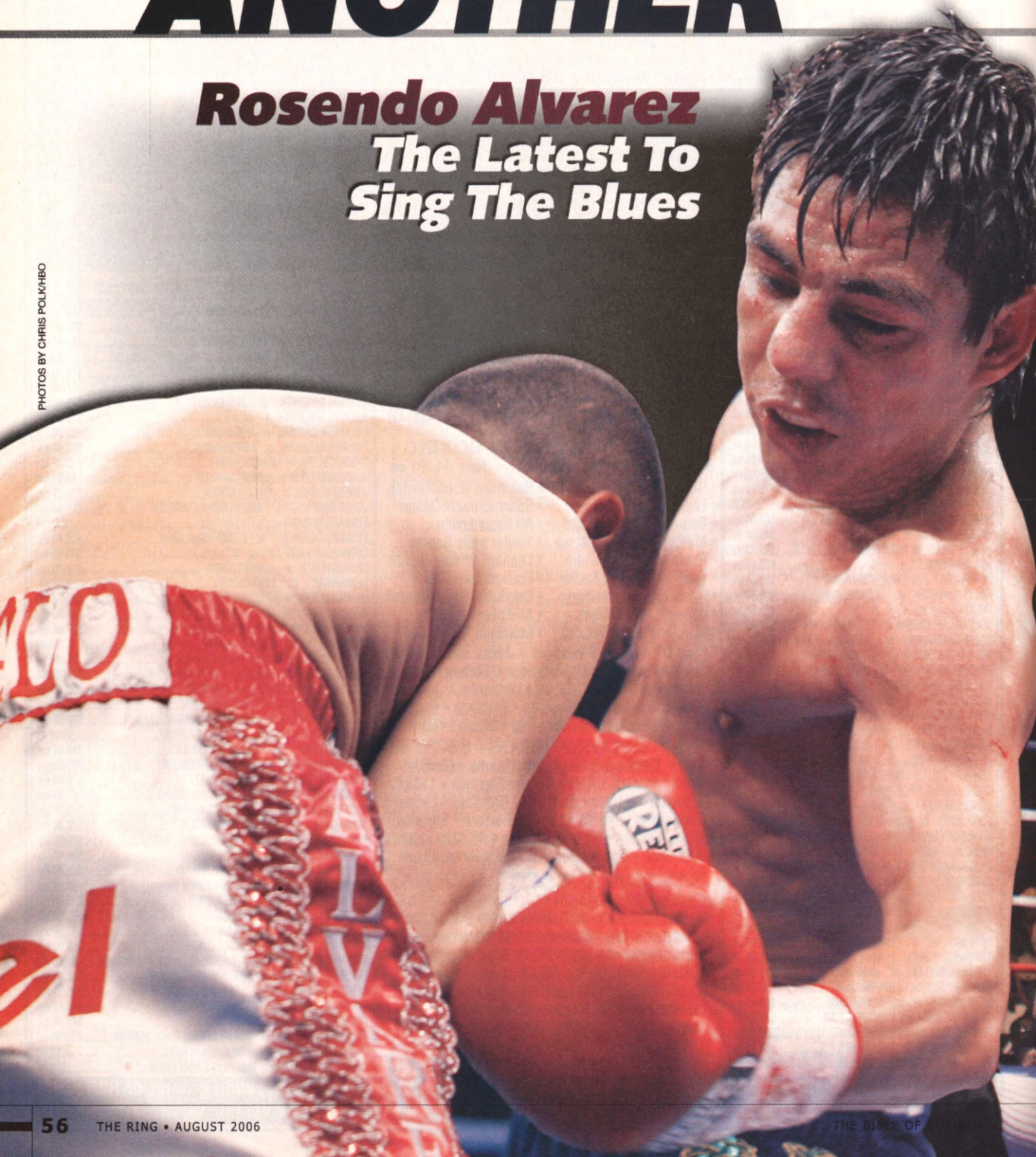
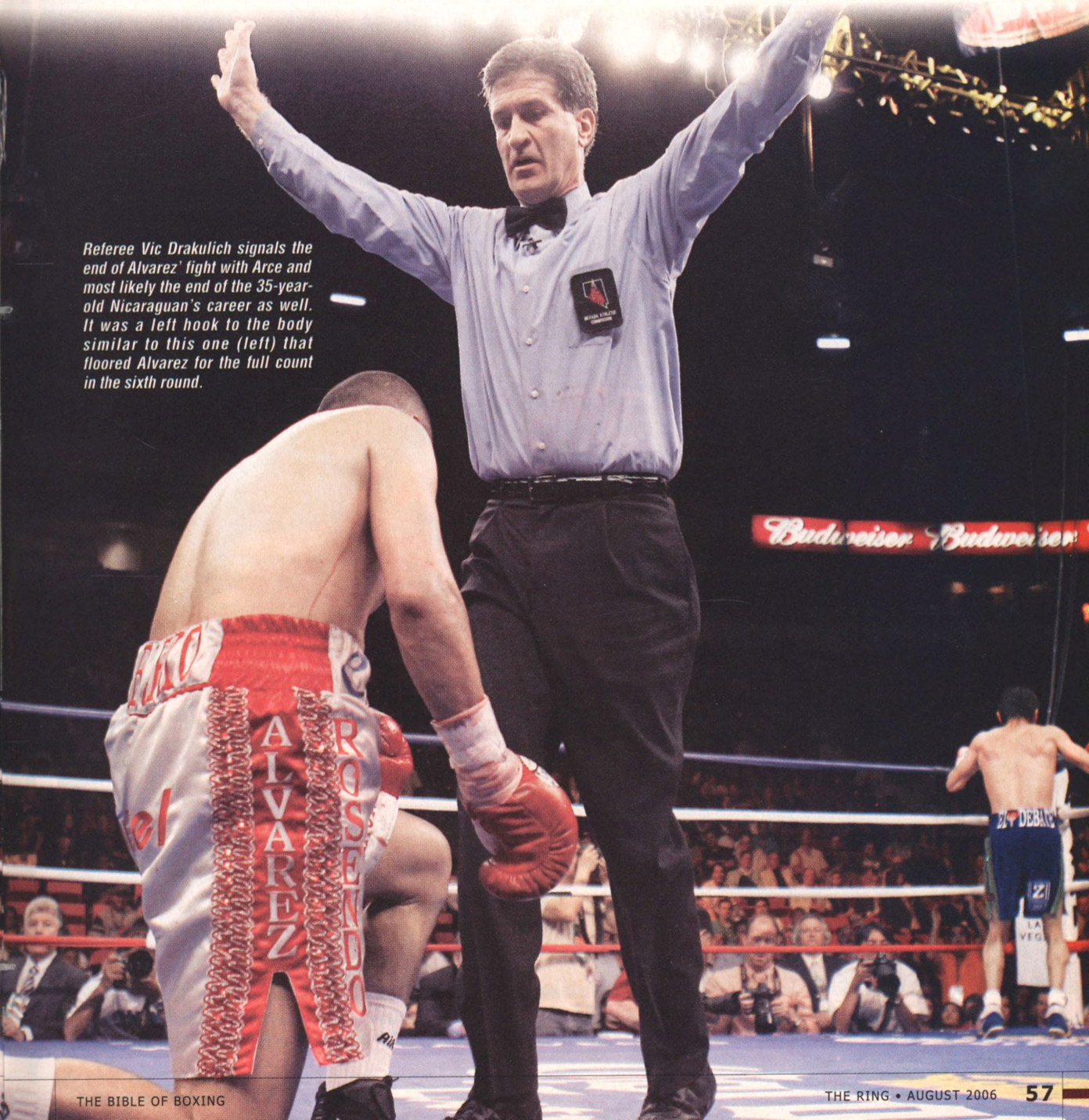


PHOTOS BY CHRIS POLK/HBO

By Brent Matteo Alderson

As the legend goes, blues man Robert Johnson went to the crossroads—a purportedly magical place in the rural South where two roads intersect in a perpendicular fashion—and made a deal with the Devil. He supposedly traded his soul to become the greatest Delta blues man that the world would ever know. But regardless if you're familiar with this myth or not, the word "crossroads" has a powerful meaning for everyone and represents a crucial point in time with effects that will forever be felt by the parties involved.

While boxing broadcasters and publicists are far too liberal with the term "crossroads fight," every now and then it genuinely applies, which was definitely the case when Jorge



Referee Vic Drakulich signals the end of Alvarez' fight with Arce and most likely the end of the 35-year-old Nicaraguan's career as well. It was a left hook to the body similar to this one (left) that floored Alvarez for the full count in the sixth round.

Arce and Rosendo Alvarez clashed on the undercard of the Floyd Mayweather-Zab Judah pay-per-view at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas. It was the classic pairing of an aging former champion and a rising star, and everybody knew that both fighters' professional lives would be dramatically affected by the outcome.

For the 35-year-old Alvarez, it turned out to be the end of a pretty good career, but perhaps not as good as it could have been. True, the hard-punching Nicaraguan had held THE RING and WBA belts at junior flyweight and the WBA title at 105-pounds, but he never really capitalized on his brutal, two-fight series with Ricardo Lopez. Even though he lost the rematch to Lopez (after knocking him down and holding him to a technical draw the first time), he'd given the Mexican mini-icon the two toughest battles of his unbeaten career. The Lopez fights earned Alvarez a significant degree of respect, and there was reason to believe his savvy, hard-nose style could possibly help fill the void that was left in the lower weight divisions with the retirements of Lopez, Michael Carbajal, and Humberto "Chiquita" Gonzalez. But it wasn't to be.

Instead, Alvarez languished in Don King's vast stable, as King concentrated on advancing the careers of more profitable fighters such as Evander Holyfield and Felix Trinidad. Alvarez' situation was complicated by alcohol problems, but even after he licked that demon, inactivity continued to dog him, and he fought only six times in 2004, '01, '02, and '03 combined. The Arce bout represented his last opportunity to keep his career afloat at a near-championship level.

The 26-year-old Arce came into the match as one of the hottest little guys in the game. The charismatic slugger is already a star in his native Mexico and quickly catching on with U.S. fans thanks to his two bouts with Hussein Hussein on HBO. It also helped that he is instantly recognizable the moment he comes swaggering into the ring wearing a cowboy hat and sucking on a lollipop. Promoted by Top Rank, Arce is gaining ground on larger and more established Mexican favorites such as Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales. Ironically, he is being handled in exactly the manner that would have benefited Alvarez a few years ago.

Still, King can't be blamed for all of Alvarez' career disappointments. He has also struggled at the scale, and, when he failed to make weight for his 2004 defense against Beibis Mendoza, Alvarez was forced to forfeit the junior flyweight championship, even though the fight went ahead as scheduled and he won the decision. By then, Alvarez'

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

After allowing Alvarez to outwork him in the opening round, Arce stepped up the pace of his attack and handed his adversary a steady beating. As is usually the case, Arce gave a fan-friendly performance, which is the main reason such a small fighter is getting so much television exposure.

PHOTO BY CHRIS POLK/HBO

Alvarez and Arce land simultaneous left hands, but Arce's connected with far more force. Although some say that the last thing a fighter loses is his punch, Alvarez showed little of the power that had previously stopped 24 of his 37 victims.

wife, Ana Donaire, was managing a growing stable of fighters, and fans began to see far more of her husband working other fighters' corners than fighting himself.

Arce, meanwhile, had put his 1999 knockout loss to Carbajal behind him and streaked to 23 consecutive victories. There were some decent names among his victims, but Top Rank was on the lookout for meaningful opponents to advance his career when a proposed alphabet eliminator between he and Alvarez suddenly turned into a grudge match.

Things turned ugly when, in January 2006, Arce beat Adonis Rivas, one of the fighters managed by Alvarez' wife. Tempers flared in the immediate aftermath, and Alvarez and Arce got into a scuffle that ended with Alvarez slapping Arce in the face. Thus under pressure from both camps, King and Arum made the match, which fit in very well with the "Sworn Enemies" theme of the main event between Mayweather and Judah.

Unfortunately, the fight didn't live up to the hype. With the exception of the first round, when Alvarez was busier than his younger foe and managed to nick him over the right eye with a left hook, Arce dominated. He unleashed an impressive array of punches to the body and head, and, even though Alavarez punched back, his blows didn't carry anywhere near the steam of his rival's. Age and ring wear played a role, but, as Alavarez failed to make weight, conditioning was also most likely a factor.

After absorbing a painful-looking left hook to the body in the sixth, Alvarez took a knee and waited for referee Vic Drakulich to count him out at the 1:54 mark. It was obvious that Alvarez, 37-3-2 (24), could have risen and continued, but he decided to simply stay down rather than take a prolonged beating from his younger, faster, hungrier rival.

"Arce really took this as a grudge match, and Alvarez, for as much talk as he did about how he didn't like Jorge, came in as if it was his retirement plan," said MaxBoxing.com's Steve Kim. "He didn't train properly, came in three pounds overweight, and seemed to give up pretty easily when the going got tough."

It wasn't the most noble exit for a fighter of Alvarez' stature; that's for sure. He'd taken the wrong turn at the crossroads, and, for all intents and purposes, his days of being a world-class prizefighter are over. In all likelihood, he will continue to be involved with the sport and work with his wife's stable of fighters in Nicaragua, where boxing is second only to baseball in terms of popularity.

Conversely, the fight confirmed Arce's standing as must-see fighter whose furious aggression has the potential to turn any of his bouts into a entertaining spectacle.

"Alvarez is a great champion, a very strong fighter, but I'm at the point where everything is coming together—my experience, my strength, and my youth," said Arce. "Right now, I feel like I'm in a rhythm when I'm in there. I'm very happy about the fact that I was able to shut his mouth."

Despite his gregarious personality

PHOTO BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Among those under discussion as future opponents for Arce are (from left to right) WBC super flyweight titleholder Masamori Tokuyama, WBA super fly titlist Martin Castillo, and IBF bantamweight beltholder Rafael Marquez.

and ability to thrill spectators, Arce, 44-3-1 (34), is not as one-dimensional as some might assume.

"He has this reputation for being an ultra aggressive blood-and-guts brawler, but the truth is behind his *huevos*, so to speak, and all that macho stuff, he can box," said MaxBoxing.com's Doug Fisher. "He's a very experienced young fighter, and he systematically broke down a wily veteran with a lot of experience."

The unexpectedly easy victory over Alvarez validated the praise that Arce has received and many feel that he has a chance to develop marketability similar to that of Jorge Paez, another fighter who had the skills to go along with an attention-grabbing personality. Moreover, Arce is a far bigger hitter than Paez, which can only add to his appeal.

"The one thing Jorge Arce has done on a fight-by-fight basis is make himself perhaps the most recognizable and most exciting fighter below the featherweight division," said Kim.

Arce's manager, Francisco Beltran, believes that his fighter will one day carry the mantle of Mexico's premier fighter.

"He's a great representative for Mexico, and he has all of the ingredients to be the next Mexican superstar," said Beltran. "Morales and Barrera are special fighters—legends—but they are at the end of their careers. Arce is the next generation."

If Arce is to eventually become Mexico's top fighter, a lot depends on getting the matches necessary to elevate him to that position. There has been a lot of talk about fights with Brian Viloria, who holds the WBC title at 108 pounds, and the WBA 115-pound titleholder Martin Castillo, both of whom are also promoted by Top Rank. But Arce and his people claim to have different plans.

"I would love to fight Castillo," said Arce. "Show me the contract, and I'll sign it right now, but I want to win the WBC version of the title first, so we can make it a unification bout." Beltran echoed the same sentiment: "First we want to go after the WBC champ at 115, and then, afterwards, we'll fight whoever, anybody who wants to fight."

Their plan seems illogical, especially since making a fight with Castillo would appear to be so much easier. The WBC 115-pound titleholder, Japan-based North Korean Masamori Tokuyama, has never fought outside of Asia and a promoter would have to overpay him to put his belt on the line in the United States. Maybe Arce's camp was just paying lip service to the WBC, so that the organization would treat him in a favorable manner. But regardless of their motivation, Frank Espinoza, Castillo's manager, sounded eager to make the match.

"It's good for the public, and it'll be a great fight," said Espinoza. "He's a good fighter, he's popular, he comes to fight—and his style is made for us. We're supposed to have a date on July 29 on the undercard of a big fight involving Antonio Margarito, but nothing has been signed. Hopefully, we can make the Arce fight happen."

A match with the popular Viloria seems less likely because Arce indicated that he no longer wants to fight at flyweight.

"I showed everyone that I'm big for a 112-pounder, and I immediately want

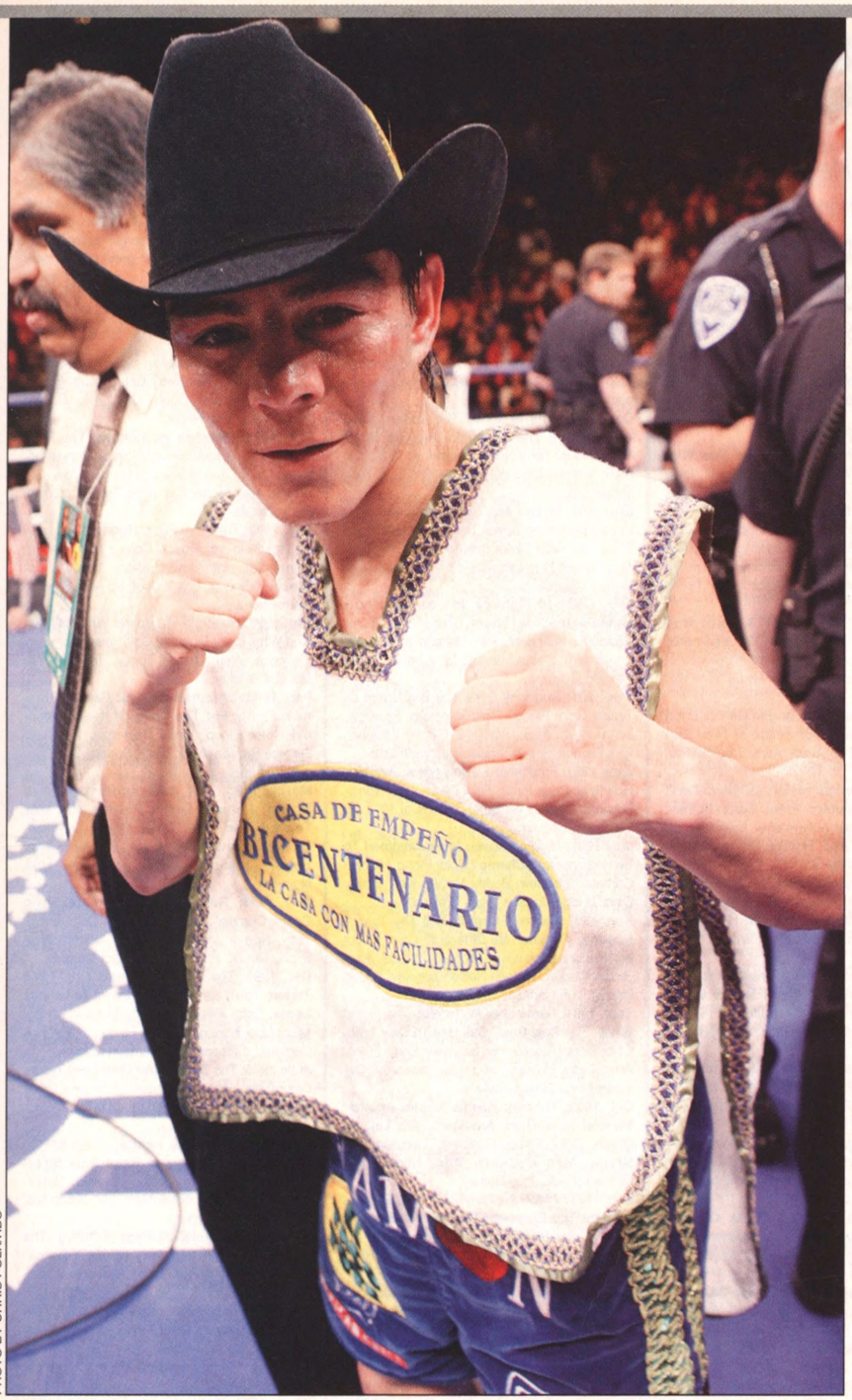

PHOTO BY CHRIS POLK/HBO

Arce poses in his cowboy hat after disposing of Alvarez. As more established stars such as Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales age, some believe Arce might become Mexico's most popular fighter.

to go up to 115 pounds," said Arce, who has experienced difficulties making weight throughout most of a pro career that began in 1996 at 110 pounds. "Then, eventually, I want to move up to 118 and fight Rafael Marquez, if he's still around."

Regardless of what direction his career takes, there will be other crossroad fights for Arce in the coming years. Alvarez, on the other hand, can do little but look back and ponder what might have been. At least he stayed on top longer than Robert Johnson, who died at the age of 27. Then again, Alvarez didn't sell his soul to the Devil; he simply signed a contract with Don King. ■

Brent Matteo Alderson is a California-based freelance writer and an occasional contributor to this magazine.

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Mosley-Vargas II

Sugar

Dramatic contrast: This is how winner Mosley and loser Vargas looked after their first fight. But until Vargas' left eye became so swollen that the fight had to be stopped, it had been a close, entertaining contest, worthy of a rematch.

Will It End This Way Again?

By Paul Salgado
PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

If you are contemplating reasons for Shane Mosley and Fernando Vargas to fight again, you could start with the surprising 410,000 pay-per-view purchases it generated. Even though the bout pitted two of boxing's most recognizable stars, the fight was widely believed to have arrived five years too late. As it turned out, the paying public knew better than the critics. Even if Mosley and Vargas' glimmer is beginning to fade, they were still able to thrill us with an entertaining and dramatic fight in February, which is perhaps the best reason for doing it again.

Maybe it was a case of Mosley and Vargas finding each other when they most needed to. Neither looked particularly inspired in recent performances, and although each remains a special breed, no one would mistake them for the same caliber of fighter they were several years ago. But the first Mosley-Vargas fight served to remind us that elite fighters often need special challenges to keep their focus and resurrect dormant skills, particularly in the later stages of a career.

Mosley's ability to repeatedly connect with the right hand was a major factor in his victory over Vargas. Even though Mosley isn't a knockout puncher at junior middleweight, his blows still stung, piled up points, and eventually did enough damage to force a stoppage.

There is also a matter of styles. Sugar Shane is better suited to an aggressive, come-to-fight type like Vargas than a slick, defensive-minded boxer like Winky Wright and Vernon Forrest (the only men to have defeated Mosley). Conversely, Mosley doesn't punch as hard as Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya, the two opponents that handed "El Feroz" knockout losses.

"I think," said HBO analyst Larry Merchant, "the fighters were very undersold by most experts before the first fight and they showed they had the zeal and the passion to fight, even if they weren't at the same level of their very best. They were hardly shot fighters."

In their entertaining first meeting, Mosley skirted in and out during the

A naturally larger man, Vargas' edge in strength and punching power might enable him to turn things in his favor in the rematch. He did manage to clip Mosley with some good left hooks in the first fight, but not enough to floor or offset Mosley's busier work rate.

A long-range fight would benefit Mosley, but in order to keep Vargas on the outside, he'll have to keep his left jab in "El Feroz'" face. Vargas, on the other hand, will need to negate Mosley's speed and get close enough to land his potent left hook.

early rounds, all the while hammering Vargas with looping rights that caused swelling around his left eye. Even so, Vargas was steadfast, and his steady pressure and occasional bombs kept it close on the scorecards. When referee Joe Cortez was compelled to end matters in the 10th because the lump over Vargas' eye had grown to hideous proportions, the fight was virtually deadlocked on the judges' cards, with Chuck Giampa and Paul Smith having Mosley ahead 86-85 and Patrica Jarman seeing it 86-85 for Vargas. While the stoppage was justified, we were left wondering what might have been had Vargas not suffered a handicap so early in the fight. Exciting fights are reason enough to yearn for an encore, but a what-if factor added to the equation practically demands it.

"I think a case can be made that Vargas might have won but for the injury that showed up very early in the fight," said Merchant. "I'm not saying I agree, I'm just saying a case can be made. There were some questions, some doubts, and so that is, in itself, reason to revisit it."

As in their first fight, the burden of proof will weigh more heavily on Vargas. Questions about his chronic back problems and the fallout from steroid use abounded prior to the first bout. And although he is just 28 years old, many believe Vargas, 26-3 (22), may have prematurely aged in the ring after the wear-and-tear of spectacular wars with Trinidad and De La Hoya. Still, even with impaired vision, Vargas was fighting with his typically indomitable spirit and was trading blows with Mosley right up until the end.

But while Vargas was definitely competitive in the first bout, it doesn't diminish the fact he was legitimately stopped because of the severe punishment Mosley was able to administer to his left eye. Previous injuries, such as cuts or broken hands, often reoccur during the heat of competition, and Vargas has shown a history of swollen eyes, though never to quite the extent as against Mosley. With their second fight slated for July 15, trainer Joe Goossen thinks five months should be enough time for the injury to heal, but believes Mosley will likely focus on the injury as part of his rematch strategy.

"If you were Shane Mosley, what would you do?" asked Goossen. "That was no mouse; it was more like an elephant!"

Mosley owns the psychological advantage over Vargas, having already bettered him in February. Moreover, Mosley has demonstrated an ability to do well in rematches. Even in his back-to-back defeats to both Forrest and Wright, he fought better the second time.

For Mosley, 42-4 (36), the winning formula against Vargas was proven in the first fight when his agile boxing skills and superior hand speed were enough for him to administer damage early and often. Still, until the opportunity to earn another big purse for a rematch with Vargas was dangled in front of him, Mosley stated that he wanted to compete as a welterweight, where he'd tallied two win in between the second loss to Wright and the TKO of Vargas. For the first Vargas bout, Mosley weighed in at 152, two pounds under the division limit. According to HBO's unofficial day-of-the fight

weight-in, he'd gained seven pounds by the time he walked into the ring. But by fight time, Mosley was staring at a Vargas who, at 166 pounds, was a full-fledged super middleweight.

Vargas' ongoing battle with weight has been well-documented, and even though he was rumored to have struggled to pare down for the first fight, he still showed a strength advantage over Mosley, frequently using his bulk to muscle his rival around the ring. The pressure applied by a heavier Vargas in the first fight is sure to be redoubled in the second bout, and it is not inconceivable that a grueling fight against a naturally bigger opponent could exact a toll on Mosley's stamina in the later rounds.

"I don't know that the way the fight is fought can be changed," said Merchant. "Sometimes fighters make adjustments to what they were able to exploit or fell victim to in the first fight, but they are not going to be different fighters. It's conceivable there is a different outcome. A high percentage of rematches end with the winner of the first fight winning the second fight more convincingly. But we have enough examples, Barrera-Morales being one, that it's not an immutable law of nature that that's the way you have to bet."

The stakes remain high for both fighters. Going into the first match, the consensus held that the loser would likely be dropped from a pay-per-view roster only reserved for boxing's most esteemed practitioners. Vargas and Mosley have long held membership to that privileged club, and pride—not to mention the allure of several more lucrative paydays in high-profile fights—will again be a key aspect of their motivation. Should he win, Mosley will likely scope out his options at 147 pounds, where his size and previous success suggests he can be competitive against the recent influx of attractive names such as Floyd Mayweather, Ricky Hatton, and the winner of the Arturo Gatti-Carlos Baldomir showdown.

Win or lose, there no way Vargas will be dropping down to welterweight. But a convincing victory over Mosley could perhaps lead to bout with the winner of the upcoming middleweight title match between Wright and defending champion Jermain Taylor. Of course, a Wright victory would make that more likely, as Vargas' disputed decision over Wright in 1999

Even when Vargas did manage to work his way inside fairly consistently, Mosley's quicker hands often allowed him to get off first and frequently find a hole on Vargas' hands-high defense.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Trainer John David Jackson douses Mosley with water between rounds of the first Vargas fight. Some observers think that if Vargas can apply grinding pressure, Sugar Shane will fade late in the fight, which will allow his bigger, stronger adversary to prevail.

would be the perfect hook on which to hang another match between them.

Then again, if the rematch furnishes the expected fireworks, and Vargas emerges the winner, a rubber match with Mosley would also be an attractive option. But let's not get too far ahead of the game; there is still plenty of debate over who will prevail in the rematch.

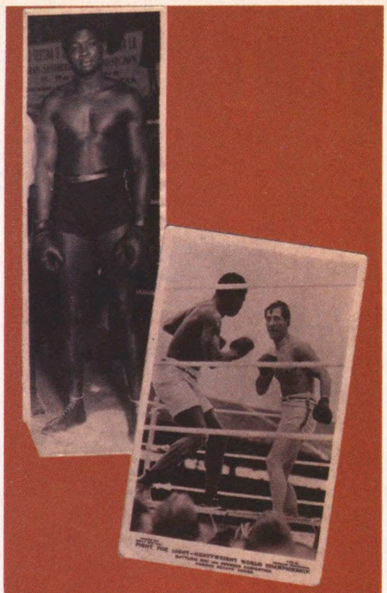
"I think, all things being equal, Vargas probably comes in much more competitive and has the edge in the rematch," said Tim Graham, who covered the first fight for *The Buffalo News*. "Vargas, love him or hate him, you can't deny the fact that he has incredible heart. Even with that eye injury, he never backed down—and it looked bad from an observer's standpoint, and it had to be incredibly difficult to fight with. And for all the shots that Mosley gave him, he wasn't able to truly rock Vargas or shake him to the point that he was almost going down. I could see Vargas winning the fight on hustle and heart."

According to Goossen, a lack of punishing fights has kept the 34-year-old-Mosley physically preserved. In previous years, Goossen has worked firsthand with Mosley in the gym and has seen subtle evidence of diminished speed and combination punching ability. But the trainer thinks any physical skill Mosley has lost is more than compensated for by intelligence.

"I think Shane gained a lot of confidence winning the fight and being on the outside and keying in on that eye. But I think it all depends on Fernando," said Goossen. "I see it being very competitive again."

One day, maybe in the not-too-distant future, both Vargas and Mosley will actually be as shot as so many thought they were going into their first encounter. But that time has not yet arrived, and, until it does, we can expect them to continue providing fans with captivating fights. Like Mark Twain, their demise had been wildly exaggerated, and if their first fight wasn't enough to convince everybody that they are still pay-per-view-worthy, the guess here is that their second fight will. ■

Paul Salgado is a Toronto-based freelance writer and an occasional contributor to this magazine.



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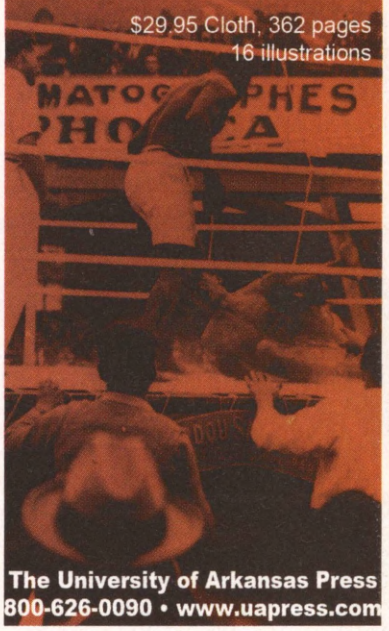

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After Going Bankrupt, Getting Shot, And Standing Up To Mike Tyson ...

PROMOTER FRANK WARREN IS BACK ON TOP

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

By Brian Doogan

Resilience. The quality that enables a person, when down, to bounce back up again. On a cold November night in 1989, Frank Warren stepped from a Bentley outside the Broadway Theatre in Barking, East London, to attend a boxing show. His mood was good. A huge investment in a £40-million development in London docklands was about to pay dividends with the imminent completion of a syndicate deal with a major bank. In his own words, he "would be flying." But death was stalking him.

Out of the shadows, a hooded man approached and fired four bullets at him from a 9mm. pistol. Warren was struck in the chest, but remained conscious, attempting to grab his would-be assassin. His business manager managed to pull the assailant to the ground before he regained his footing and fled the scene. Warren was taken to the hospital where doctors performed emergency surgery. He had lost half a lung and a lot of blood, and his wife, Susan, was told that it was 50-50 if he would make it through the night.

He did, but in just nine days his weight dropped from 168 pounds to 126. Even so, he insisted on discharging himself to salvage his business, which virtually collapsed.

"Banks don't like it when their clients are getting shot," Warren reflected with

a wry smile in his Hertfordshire office on a bright April morning, just weeks after the land of which he owned 70 percent, including the London Arena (but lost as his business went bust) was sold for £220-million. "What are you going to do? Wallow in self-pity? It's gone. You get on with life. That's it. My only thought after the shooting was to get back."

But the thought of getting his own back also crossed his mind.

"I wanted a bit of revenge," Warren acknowledged. "How could I get it? We all know how I could have got it. But had that happened, it would have killed my business. I had to discipline myself. I had a family. I found it hard."

Terry Marsh, a junior welterweight boxer from Battersea, south London, whom Warren promoted to the IBF title in 1987 before he retired under a cloud a year later when the British Boxing Board of Control withdrew his license following reports he suffered from epilepsy, was charged with the attempt on Warren's life, but acquitted.

"I got called as a witness, but never identified him in court," Warren said. "I didn't see the man who shot me because he was wearing a mask. When I heard the first bang, I thought it was a car backfiring. I then turned around and saw somebody standing in front of me, shaking, holding a gun. I looked at him and thought it was a joke to start with. He fired and missed, then it clicked. It didn't hurt where [the bullet] went in, but it hurt where it came out (in his left side under his arm). I started gurgling because the bullet went through a lung and you feel like you're drowning. But I got through.

"When people meet me, they think that what they see, that's it. But there's more there. I grew up in Islington (north London, in a fourth-floor flat), which was a tough old area when I was a kid. There were a few scrapes along the way, but I would never let anybody get the better of me, physically or mentally, and I translated that into standing my corner in any situation."

Six years ago, firmly re-established as one of boxing's foremost promoters, Warren found himself putting on the second of two back-to-back Mike Tyson fights in Britain. The opponent was Lou Savarese, but a disagreement over who was liable for a large jewelry bill on Tyson's previous visit, when he went on a spending spree prior to stopping Julius Francis in Manchester, led to Warren being confronted by an angry Tyson in a suite in The Savoy in London (when he appeared ringside for the fight in Glasgow, Warren's right eye was bloodshot).

"We had a difference of opinion," Warren said sardonically. "I'm not going to comment on what happened, but I'm 54 now and he must be four or five stone (56 to 70 pounds) heavier than me, so how am I going to stand toe-to-toe with Mike Tyson? I couldn't beat him in a streetfight. I'd love to hit him over the head with a lump of wood or something, but, no, at the end of the day it was all sorted out to everyone's satisfaction, well, to my satisfaction. I just didn't like what happened."

It may not be Warren's way to snitch on others, but there were a handful of

Did former IBF junior welterweight titleholder Terry Marsh (above) shoot Warren? He was arrested and charged with the crime, but acquitted when his former promoter failed to identify him during the trial.

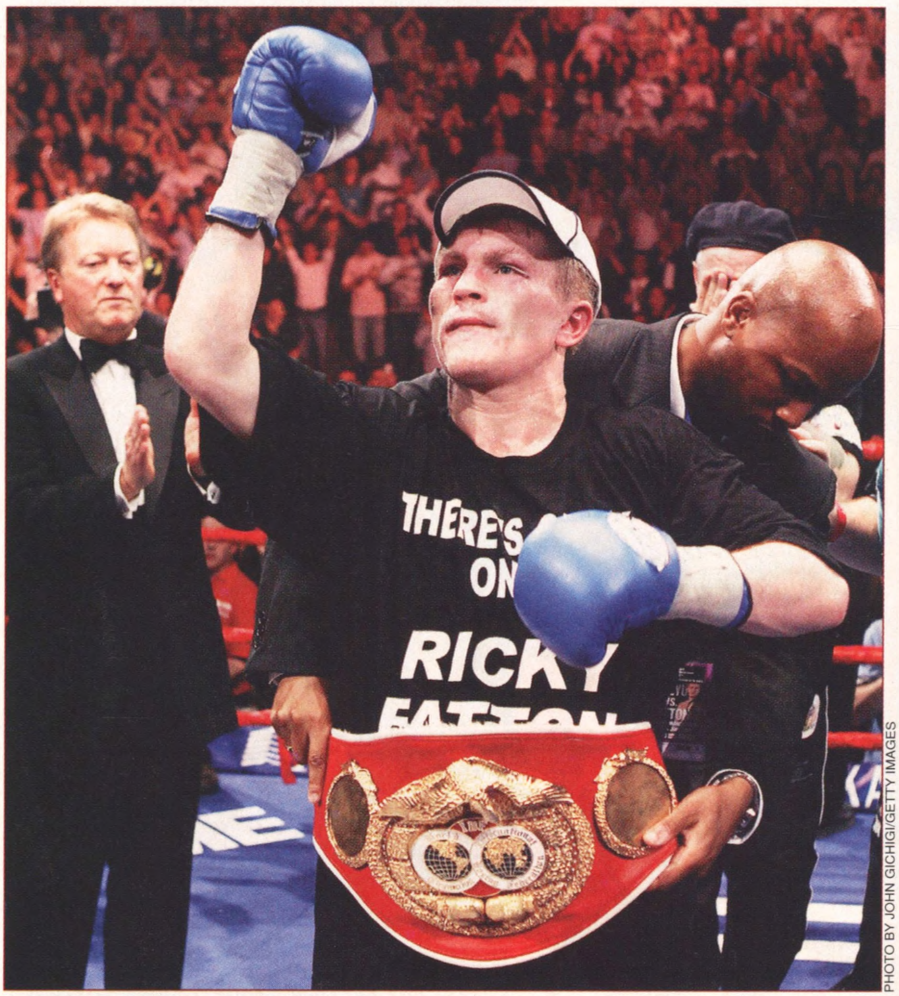

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

A tuxedo-clad Warren applauds as Ricky Hatton celebrates his career-defining victory over Kostya Tszyu. The fight marked both the apex and the end of their partnership. Warren is currently suing Hatton for breach of contract.

PHOTO BY JAY LASH

Warren with Don King and Frank Bruno during Bruno's brief reign as WBC heavyweight beltholder. Warren helped guide Bruno to the title against King-promoted Oliver McCall in 1995. Warren and King have also battled it out in court.

people in the room. Reliably, it can be said that when Tyson attacked him, Warren did not back down.

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With an easy smile and a certain grace, which belies the steely-mindedness beneath, Warren opened the door to a large room dominated by a portrait of Evander Holyfield. A fight tape had been placed in the VCR, perhaps strategically, and he suggested watching it before continuing the interview. The bout was one he promoted several years ago on the Las Vegas Strip, featuring Luis Collazo, whom Ricky Hatton was due to face on May 13 in Boston for the WBA welterweight title. It was not a flattering display. Collazo was stopped in the third round by Edwin Cassiani. Warren was on the offensive immediately.

"The facts are, if he was my son, I'd be highly delighted with the job I've done, not his whole career, but just the last three years of his career," said Warren, who is suing the world junior welterweight champion for alleged breach of contract. Hatton, who was promoted by Warren from the start of his career until their acrimonious parting after the thrilling championship victory over Kostya Tszyu, is promoted now by Dennis Hobson and Robert Waterman of Fight Academy and Art Pellulo's Banner Promotions. "He made £6.5-million, which is huge money. I thought fighting Tszyu for the title last June, in front of 20,000 people at the MEN Arena in Manchester was perfect for him. Like a boxer picks his punches, making the matches is all about timing and we (Warren's company, Sports Network) do fairly well at it.

"To get Hatton into a position of strength, we made the final eliminator so that he became mandatory challenger. Kostya Tszyu could not duck him. He and his camp wanted to do the fight in Russia or Australia, but only after paying him the money, $5-million, and putting on the pressure could we get the fight on in England. When people read that Hatton's getting more now to fight Collazo, it sounds as if I ripped him off. But he was the challenger against Tszyu, whom we had to pay a lot of money to so that he'd fight in Ricky's hometown, and he's entitled to be getting paid more now, as the champion. The disappointing thing is that I never had a row with Ricky, but it's very difficult getting between father and son (Hatton is managed by his father, Ray), and I wouldn't want to anyway. But I'm very disappointed, obviously. When I started out with Ricky Hatton, he was appearing in front of 500 people at the Wythenshawe Forum. He's just been named Fighter of the Year by THE RING and by the Boxing Writers Association of America, without having fought a main event [in the U.S]. We must have done a few things right along the way."

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A reconciliation would appear to be impossible, for their positions are too entrenched.

"Collazo in Boston is a joke fight. It's not where Ricky Hatton should be now," Warren continued. "A good Ricky Hatton I'd fancy 100 percent to beat Floyd Mayweather, and I'll tell you why. Everybody went crazy about what he did against Arturo Gatti, but Gatti's style was perfect for Mayweather. He stood in front of him and couldn't get out of the way. Mayweather is not a big guy, and a good Ricky Hatton, I'd fancy him. I know because this is a job I've done over the years. When I was working with Don King, they thought Oliver McCall was going to do a job on Frank Bruno, but we did our homework. For Bruno, stamina was a problem, and he didn't know how to fight on the inside. I took him out to the States to see Oliver McCall fight Larry Holmes, who was one of the greatest heavyweights of all-time and had the best jab of any fighter I've ever seen. McCall couldn't get out of the way of it, and that's what we worked on with Bruno, the jab. He was able to jump on McCall at the first bell, build up a lead, and hold on toward the end to win the title. He wasn't the most naturally gifted, Bruno, but we knew what we were doing.

"The same with Nigel Benn against Gerald McClellan. Nobody gave Benn a chance. It turned out to be a terrible, tragic fight, but Nigel won. Danny Williams against Mike Tyson was another. I fancied Danny if he could just survive Tyson's initial onslaught, which is what he did. The thing is, if you go round to somebody's door and sell them a brush and the first day the handle falls off, they're not going to buy anything next time round. The key to my longevity in boxing is that I've delivered—for the public, for the TV companies, and for my fighters. I think I've shown I know what I'm doing."

Recently, Warren celebrated 25 years in a business he fell into by chance. His cousin, Lenny McLean, took part in unlicensed fights. Warren began to promote him, got bitten by the bug, and promoted more and more unlicensed shows until eventually he applied to the British Boxing Board of Control for a license. But the cartel of Mickey Duff, Jarvis Astaire, Mike Barrett, and Terry Lawless ran the show. Warren, now dominant in the same domain, was treated like an itinerant. Forced to pursue an action for restraint of trade, he found his feet and completed a deal with the terrestrial television company, ITV, to whom he recently returned with his stable of fighters after a decade with subscription network, BSkyB.

"I used to get into a few fights when I was young in this game because I'm one of these people. Now I do things in a different way," he said. "I put all my energy into making things work for the business. When I first started, you weren't allowed to put on a major show within 28 days of the previous one, but no one could tell me the definition of 'a major show.' All I knew was that every time I wanted to put on a show, my show was a major show. They tried to stop me. But I learnt hard lessons in those days. I lost £20,000 on my first show, a lot of money then, a lot of money now. But I was determined, had a bit of balls, and I put my money up."

Benn, Chris Eubank, Steve Collins, and Michael Watson ushered in a new era.

"If you look at some of the big-name fighters from the 1960s and 1970s, the so-called golden era of the sport, they've got next to nothing, a lot of them," Warren said. "But those who followed couldn't spend the money they've earned. They're multimillionaires. Boxing has never been in a healthier state in this country. When I took my fighters to Sky in 1995, it was the best thing at the time and the most important thing I got out of it was a nursery. I got small shows to develop talent. People said that was the end of boxing, but I took Ricky Hatton through, so that disproved that. Now we're back on terrestrial television, delivering huge viewing figures, and we're filling out arenas up and down the country."

The stars of his stable are Joe Calzaghe, the quiet Welshman still basking in the glory of his virtuoso performance against Jeff Lacy to become the first world super middleweight champion recognized by THE RING, and Amir

Khan, the 19-year-old prodigy from Bolton, a British Muslim who transcends his sport. While watching him break through at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens—at 17, raw but nerveless—Warren decided quickly that Khan was the most exciting Olympian he had seen since Sugar Ray Leonard.

"I love Khan, everything about him," he enthused. "For me, especially given that he had only 11 senior bouts going into the Olympics, what most impressed me was his fight with Mario Kindelan (the Cuban who won his second Olympic gold medal by beating Khan in the final). Pound-for-pound, Kindelan was the top amateur in the world, and Khan was behind after three rounds. The final round he knew was do or die and he went and tried to knock Kindelan out. I thought straight away that the kid has balls, and I really think he can become a special fighter in the years to come.

And Calzaghe?

"I've always said that Joe is one of the most talented men in the business. Go to Byron Mitchell and ask him, Omar Sheika, Charles Brewer, Richie Woodhall, ask all of them. He's had the problems with his hands and a lot of personal problems. There are guys who go through divorces and are tearing their hair out, but he had to keep training and getting in the ring and fighting, and he's come though it all. The fight with Jeff Lacy, honestly, was the best performance I've ever seen by a British fighter, and Joe, I firmly believe, would have beaten Roy Jones and Bernard Hopkins back when they were at the top of their game. We had the fight with Hopkins made, everything agreed, then the next day he came back and looked for double his purse.

"With Jones, I never bought that stuff about how great he was. The steroids thing, which they covered up (Jones tested positive following his bout 2000 bout with Richard Hall), for me ... guys don't start off at middleweight and suddenly become heavyweights. Let me tell you, Joe Calzaghe would have beaten Roy Jones in his prime. The fight with Antonio Tarver is definitely what we want to do now."

A man of fine tastes and a fan of Frank Sinatra, whom he promoted at the London Arena, Warren's regrets are too few to mention. But the demise of Naseem Hamed would surely be one, while Don King might put it at 12 million (the amount, in dollars, that Warren paid his erstwhile partner in a court settlement). There are paradoxes too. In one breath he recommended the movie *Gangs Of New York*, for Daniel Day Lewis' brilliant performance and in the next warned of the violence depicted by Martin Scorsese, which he found excessive. Maybe the ultimate irony is that the one-time itinerant has become so much a part of the establishment that some people say he has the Board of Control in his pocket. Tellingly, he put his hand in his pocket to finance the introduction of MRI scans, now a mandatory requirement in British boxing. He was also instrumental in brokering the settlement between the Board and Michael Watson, who sued for damages following his near life-ending encounter with Eubank.

"I've been doing this for 25 years and my business is doing better than ever before and so is the sport," Warren concluded. "I've always been good at making things happen, in generating money. I'm doing well and my fighters are doing well. I'm the eternal optimist, but I'm also a realist. I've been very lucky in my life. I'm alive, and I have a great family, and, really, that's all a man can ask for."

As for Warren's reputation as a man not to be messed with, just ask Mike Tyson. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

Warren and his latest protégé Amir Khan, who won a silver medal for the U.K. in the 2004 Olympics and has already attracted a large following in Britain. Warren thinks Khan is the most exciting Olympian since Sugar Ray Leonard.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Wladimir Klitschko KO 7 Chris Byrd
(*Wins IBF Title*)
Dominick Guinn W 10 Audley Harrison
Sinan Sam W 12 George Arias
Alexander Dimitrenko W 12 Fernely Feliz
Matt Skelton KO 4 Suren Kalachyan
Kevin McBride KO 4 Brian Polley
Derek Bryant KO 4 Taurus Sykes
Ray Austin KO 2 Jeremy Bates
Oleg Platov KO 6 Colin Kenna
Aldo Colliander KO 3 Daniil Peretyatko
Zoltan Petranyi W 8 Norbert Sallai
Jason Gavern W 6 Rafael Butler

Cruiserweights

Ismail Abdoul W 10 Don Diego Poeder
Vitaliy Rusal W 8 Vadim Skorkin
Ludovic Mace W 8 Tefouet Dieudonne

Light Heavyweights

Gustavo Arroyo W 12 Ramiro Siordia
Hugo Garay W 10 Gustavo Enriquez
Thomas Ulrich W 10 Henry Saenz
Chris Henry KO 7 Etienne Whitaker
Jose Luis Herrera KO 4 Jorge Castro
Jaffa Ballogou KO 7
Oleksandr Garashenko

Super Middleweights

Librado Andrade KO 7 Otis Grant
Mger Mkrtchian KO 11
Jackson Chanet
Jerson Ravelo KO 1 Donnell Wiggins

Middleweights

Edison Miranda KO 7
Howard Eastman
Sebastian Sylvester KO 3
Steven Bendall
Laszlo Szucs W 12 Sergey Khomitsky
Willie Gibbs KO 12 Lenord Pierre
Antwun Echols D 10 Mohammad Said
Dmitry Pirog W 10 Sergey Tatevosyan

Junior Middleweights

Verno Phillips W 10 J.C. Candelo
Shinsuke Matsumoto KO 4
Kaenkart Chuwatana
Zaurbek Baysangurov KO 3
Laszlo Buranyi
Paul Williams KO 2 Sergio Rios
Andre Berto KO 3 Horatio Garcia
Yuki Nonaka W 10
Thanongsak Sor Pramtalay
Joey Vegas W 10 Simeon Cover
Matt O'Brien W 8 Damone Wright

Welterweights

Floyd Mayweather W 12 Zab Judah
(*Wins IBF Title*)
Kermit Cintron KO 10 David Estrada
Frederic Klose W 12 Antonio Luari
Richard Gutierrez W 10 Hicklet Lau
Said Ouali KO 6 Paul Delgado
Victor Puiu KO 5 Walter Sergio Gomez
Mike Arnaoutis KO 1 Mike Walker
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 2 Tyler Oliva

Junior Welterweights

Arturo Morau W 12 Emanuel Augustus
Daudy Bahari W 12 Dennis Laurente
Janos Petrovics KO 3 Attila Jonas
Andrzej Sark KO 3 Laszlo Bognar
Marcos Rene Maidana KO 1 Omar Leon
Robert Maczik KO 1 Kevin Matausch

Lightweights

Juan Diaz W 12 Jose Miguel Cotto
(Retains WBA Lightweight Title)
Isaac Hlatshwayo W 12 Nate Campbell
Wes Ferguson W 10 Josesito Lopez
Dainoshin Kuma W 10
Songkom Jockygym
Kengo Nagashima W 10 Shunsuke Ito
Tomonori Nakagawa W 10
Muangfahlek Kiatwichean
Tsuyoshi Takayama W 10
Tetsuya Suzuki
Saddam Kietyongyuth KO 1
Richard Sandikal
Mirai Ishigaki KO 1
Kompayak Sithdanchai
Martin Watson W 10 Ryan Barrett
Hector Alatorre W 8 Arturo Quintero
Janos Nagy W 8 Evgeny Strausov

Junior Lightweights

Lehlohonolo Ledwaba KO 6
Ephraim Nangenda
Valdemir Pereira W 10 Yuri Romanovich
Jorge Solis KO 3 Adalberto Borquez
Mohamed Benbiou KO 2 Cyril Thomas

Featherweights

Andras Meszaros W 12 Zsolt Nagy
Shoji Kimura W 10
Yoddamrong Sithyodthong

PHOTO BY FRANCIOS NASCIMBENI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Bloody French welterweight Klose hones in on Luari

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HEIMANN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Middleweight Sylvester crashes a right into Bendall

Steve Foster W 12 John Simpson
Ina Menzer KO 4 Maribel Santana
Edel Ruiz KO 4 Cristobal Teran
Jose Alberto Gonzalez KO 4
Verquan Kimbrough

Junior Featherweights

Julio Zarate W 12 Antonio Meza
Gabula Vabaza W 12
Moises Gutierrez
Kohei Ohba W 10 Riki Shinho
Takalani Ndvolu KO 3 Fabio Oliva
Kenbun Torres W 10
Kumarnthong Por Pluemkamol
Wethya Sakmuangklang KO 2
Simson Butar Butar

Bantamweights

Hozumi Hasegawa KO 9
Veeraphol Sahaprom
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Silence Mabuza W 12 Ricardo Vargas
Ivan Hernandez W 12 Roberto Leyva
Jose Nieves W 10 Tomas Rojas
Simone Maludrottu W 12 Damaen Kelly
Katsuyuki Takayoshi KO 4 Ryuta Ariki
Kazuyoshi Niki KO 1
Phalangchai Chuwatana

Junior Bantamweights

Jorge Arce KO 6 Rosendo Alvarez
Hawk Makepula W 12
Christophe Rodriguez
Eric Aiken KO 6 Tim Austin
Teppei Kikui W 10 Kuniyuki Aizawa
Bernard Dunne W 8
Sergio Carlos Santillan

Flyweights

Alejandro Hernandez KO 10
Raul Medina
Francisco Soto D 10 Benito Abraham
Mhikiza Myekeni W 12 Benedict Suico

Junior Flyweights

Keita Ohmi KO 2
Phalangchai Sor Voraphin
Nobuaki Masuda D 10 Junichi Ebisuoka

Strawweights

Kenichi Horikawa W 10
Kazuma Kumada

PHOTO BY ALL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Junior bantamweight Arce blasts Alvarez with a right

Juan Diaz W 12 Jose Miguel Cotto

Las Vegas, Nevada: Neither Cotto nor Diaz were used to losing going into this fight on the Floyd Mayweather-Zab Judah undercard, but someone had to taste defeat for the first time. Even though Cotto ultimately had a loss posted on his record, neither warrior had to feel like a loser when it was over, as they fought a non-stop, action-packed 12 rounds for the fans at the Thomas & Mack Center. Diaz ultimately retained the WBA lightweight belt in his third defense and first fight in nine months, but he had to work hard every round so that it wouldn't slip away from him.

Cotto, 134, Caguas, Puerto Rico, just shaded a close first round, landing short right and left uppercuts and hooks to his opponent's head and body. In the next few rounds, Diaz, 135, Houston, Texas, could see that Cotto wanted to fight close, so he showed how, at the tender age of 20 years old, he became a titleholder. He started using an accurate left jab to keep Cotto at a distance so that he could unload his straight right hands. He also invested wisely to Cotto's body early to try to slow down the Puerto Rican. Cotto, though, was smart and he also began to attack Diaz' body.

Diaz, 22, controlled most of the middle rounds and didn't show any signs of ring rust. Cotto, who is the older brother of junior welterweight star Miguel Cotto, started to have some success in the ninth by forcing Diaz, 29-0 (14), backward, but Diaz' hand speed throughout the fight was too much for Cotto, and the Puerto Rican got hit with three- and four-punch combinations. His defense was superb. Diaz was moving and jabbing well in the final two rounds, but Cotto, 27-1 (19), was still in the fight, landing solid double left hooks to Diaz' ribs.

In the final round, Diaz, despite holding an insurmountable lead, came out like he needed a knockout and backed Cotto into a corner, while he threw lefts and rights to the 28-year-old's head and body. Diaz showed amazing energy in this fight right up until the final bell. Cotto showed a great chin, absorbing a lot of clean shots without ever showing any ill effects.

Judge Bill Graham (USA) scored the fight 116-112, Paul Smith (USA) had it 117-111, and Glen Trowbridge (USA) saw it 118-110, all for Diaz. THE RING scored it 117-111. The referee was Kenny Bayless (USA).

Television: **HBO PPV**
Promoters: **Top Rank, Don King Productions, Main Events**
(4-8-06)
Wayne McCullough

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Diaz rips home an uppercut during bristling bout with Cotto

Somsak Sithchatchawal KO 10 Mahyar Monshipour

Paris, France: In a fight that was a thrilling spectacle from the opening round, Somsak, 122, Lampang, Thailand, overwhelmed Monshipour, 121¼, Poitiers, France, via Tehran, Iran, in the 10th round, bringing to a dramatic conclusion to this WBA super bantamweight title fight that featured fluctuating action and relentless intensity. Monshipour, making his sixth defense of the belt he won from Salim Medjkoune in July 2004, was taking a battering along the ropes when the referee intervened, a climactic ending to a brutally pulsating bout that brought the capacity crowd in the Palais des Sports Marcel Cerdan to its feet.

There was a pervasive feeling of awe and sadness. Monshipour settled in Poitiers as a 10-year-old boy, and he has been embraced as one of France's most cherished sportsmen, lauded for his charitable work to help the earthquake victims in the Iranian city of Bam. His aggressive style and powerful punching earned him the sobriquet "Little Tyson," but Somsak was in no way awed by reputation. From the outset, he forced the fight, then proved his resilience when Monshipour threatened to take him out with one of many sustained assaults.

Put simply, it was all that you could expect a great fight to be—"the most exciting fight I've ever refereed," declared the veteran British official, John Coyle.

Monshipour was on the floor early in the first round, but Coyle ruled it a slip. Then, just as the 31-year-old titleholder tried to measure up a left hook, Somsak countered with a left uppercut that knocked him across the ring onto the seat of his pants. He was groggy for the remainder of the round, but recovered well in the second, thus setting the shifting pattern in momentum that so held the spectators in thrall.

Cut over his left eyebrow by the end of round two, Monshipour maintained his attack in the third, determined to overpower the Thai challenger, as he had done to his previous five challengers, all stopped. But Somsak was game and punched right with his more illustrious foe, at times appearing as if he might have punched himself out.

As the bout entered its second half, however, Somsak was still able to jab and move and land heavy right hands to the head of the tiring Monshipour. Referee Coyle had to admonish Somsak too, for landing below the belt. But the remorseless slugfest resumed, and in the ninth both fighters were hurt in ferocious exchanges. Monshipour looked as if he might fall before a late rally put Somsak on the retreat. The fight had taken a heavy toll on both men.

Finally, in the 10th, it was Monshipour who succumbed to the unremitting pressure. With little left in his tank, he was caught flush by a series of left uppercuts that backed him to the ropes. When a left hook and devastating right hand exploded against his jaw, referee Coyle chose to step in at precisely the right moment, with 1:24 on the clock, prompting wild celebrations among Somsak, 46-1-1 (37) with 1 no-contest, and his cornermen. "I am so proud. I never thought I would make it to the end of the fight," said the 28-year-old Thai.

Monshipour, 28-3-2 (18), immediately announced his retirement. "I've always said I would quit after my first deserved defeat," he said. "There will be no return."

Promoter: **Michel Acaries**
(3-18-06)
Brian Doogan

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Presented by EVERLAST
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Somsak Sithchatchawal

PHOTO BY MEHDI FEDOUACH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

There was nothing on Somsak Sithchatchawal's record to suggest he was capable of pulling this off. In 48 previous fights, he had faced precisely one world-class opponent, and that lone step-up resulted in his lone loss, a decision in 1998 to Ratanachai Vorapin. The best scalps on Somsak's record belonged to such household names as Vuyisele Bebe, Yersin Jailauov, and Edward Mpofu. He seemed wholly unqualified for a shot at Mahyar Monshipour, rated as the top contender in the division behind Ring champion Israel Vazquez, and it looked like defense number six would be a relatively easy one for the Frenchman.

But Somsak didn't travel all the way from Thailand to France just to try the brie and baguettes. In a fight that many keen European observers are calling the frontrunner for Fight of the Year, Somsak gave more than even he seemed to realize he was capable of, halting Monshipour—and his growing buzz—in the 10th round.

This, as they say, is why they fight the fights. To find out in reality, rather than on paper, who the better man is; and to provide thrills for those lucky enough to be watching. Having succeeded on both fronts, Somsak is now the number-one contender at 122 pounds and the Fighter of the Month.

PHOTO BY MEHDI FEDOUACH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Somsak rocks Monshipour with a right in bantamweight thriller

Hozumi Hasegawa KO 9
Veerapol Sahaprom

Kobe, Japan: Fast-punching and quick-shifting Hasegawa, 118, very impressively kept the WBC bantamweight belt at the World Memorial Hall against ex-titlist Veerapol, 117¾, who, at 37 years of age, has seen his near-decade of dominance over the Asian bantamweight scene come to an apparent close. Hasegawa had taken the belt from Veerapol by upset decision in April '05, and in the rematch he steadily piled up points in the early rounds, withstood Veerapol's retaliation in the seventh and eighth, and then exploded a devastating southpaw right hook to badly drop the veteran Thailander and end the fight at 0:19 of round nine.

It was a sensational fight, and a spectacular stoppage, as referee Guadalupe Garcia (Mexico) immediately declared a halt when Veerapol attempted to stand up on rubbery legs and then collapsed again. Before the end came, the official tallies were perfectly identical in every round, totaling 77-75 in favor of Hasegawa.

Hasegawa, 25, got off to a good start as he showed his superior speed with sharp left-right combinations, leaving Veerapol bewildered. Veerapol attempted to work the body to stop the beltholder's shifty mobility, and the judges gave the second round to the Thai challenger, but Hasegawa often scored with double lefts (left uppercuts to left hooks) and threw quick combos to the face and midsection.

The Japanese southpaw proceeded to sweep the third through sixth sessions. The Thailander kept attempting to hit his breadbasket, but Hasegawa timed Veerapol's bodyshots and landed faster punches to the face. Hasegawa had a clear upper hand over his slower opponent and whipped him with sharper punches nearly at will. In the sixth, Hasegawa stunned the ex-titlist with a solid left uppercut and turned loose to batter him with a flurry of punches.

But having expended a lot of energy trying to finish Veerapol, Hasegawa looked to be fading in the seventh, and Veerapol desperately kept coming forward, aiming at the midsection. In round eight, Hasegawa kept circling and countering Veerapol, and landed some good uppercuts to the face and solid lefts to the belly, but Veerapol's aggression won over the judges.

As the ninth commenced, Hasegawa, 20-2 (7), exploded a very strong and perfectly timed counter right hook to the jaw. Veerapol fell down face-first with a thud. The third man observed his grogginess and waved his arms to signal a stoppage. The sellout crowd was jubilant, few having expected the light-punching Hasegawa to score a kayo victory over the game and durable Thai legend.

"I'm very happy to show a good win before people in my hometown Kobe," said Hasegawa. "It was fortunate I could land a well-timed counter and floored him to finish this game."

Crestfallen loser Veerapol, 52-3-2 (37), said, "Hasegawa was skillful, fast, and strong." Some have speculated that this could be the end for the long-reigning Thai, but the fighter himself has not yet made any such indication.

Promoters: **Senrima Kobe Promotions, Teiken Promotions**

(3-25-06)

Joe Koizumi

Verno Phillips W 10 J.C. Candelo

New Orleans, Louisiana: What's worse: Having your dog stolen, or getting beaten up by the guy who stole your dog? It's not a question the average person knows the answer to. But Candelo does.

In a true grudge match, former alphabet beltholder Phillips decisioned friend-turned-foe Candelo in the first nationally televised sporting event emanating from the New Orleans Arena since Hurricane Katrina hit. Candelo has now suffered his share of devastation at the hands of Hurricane Verno, this ninth loss on his pro record being the latest blow. The two junior middleweight contenders were once sparring partners and pals in Phillips' hometown of Denver, Colorado, but they

PHOTO BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Hasegawa (left) overpowered Veerapol to retain WBC bantam belt

had a falling out over money borrowed by Candelo and not paid back in full. As the story goes, Phillips went to Candelo's house to collect the balance, and when he couldn't get the cash, he stole Candelo's English bulldog and re-named him "J.C." According to Candelo, Phillips also made advances on the Colombian's then-wife during the visit, a claim Phillips denies.

If some of the details of the story are uncertain, the way it ended is not. In an entertaining, high-energy 10-rounder, the favored Phillips proved the superior fighter, winning convincingly and furthering the downward spiral of Candelo's career.

Candelo, 154¼, Baytown, Texas, once a highly rated contender but winless in his previous four fights with three losses and a draw, had trouble getting his offense going in the first couple of rounds, thanks to the shifty movement and quicker fists of Phillips, 153¼. But Phillips began to stand and trade in an exciting third round, creating more opportunities for Candelo and bringing the crowd to its collective feet. Candelo built on that and found his rhythm in the fourth, creating distance and snapping his long jab into Phillips' face. The sixth was also a good round for the Texas-based Colombian, as he scored with uppercuts and bodyshots and dislodged his opponent's mouthpiece late in the round.

But Phillips, 36, took over after that, intent on beating up his rival and ending a two-fight losing streak (albeit an excusable one, with close losses to Kassim Ouma and Ike Quartey). He did some excellent bodywork in the seventh, nearly knocking Candelo through the ropes at one point, and he wobbled Candelo, 26-9-4 (18), with a right hand in the eighth. Phillips, 39-10-1 (20) with 1 no-contest, continued to outfight Candelo down the stretch, landing from all angles and even scoring a flash knockdown with a few seconds remaining in the bout.

Judge Larry Berger (USA) didn't give Candelo a single round, scoring it 100-89 for Phillips, while judges Elmo Adolph (USA) and Russell Naquin (USA) gave more reasonable assessments with their scores of 97-92 and 98-91, respectively, for Phillips. The referee was Bruce McDaniel (USA).

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Banner Promotions**
(4-5-06)

PHOTO BY ROLAND MAGUNIA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sturm cracks Masoe with a right en route to 12-round decision victory

Felix Sturm W 12 Maselino Masoe

Hamburg, Germany: It was only via disputed decision two years ago in Las Vegas that Oscar De La Hoya defeated Sturm, a reverse that threatened to cast the German back to obscurity. But after overcoming his initial disappointment, he maintained his steely resolve to emerge as a force in the 160-pound division, and another solid display of the boxing skills that so troubled De La Hoya proved sufficient to take the WBA middleweight title from Masoe at the Color Line Arena. The 39-year-old had been award-

ed the devalued belt after beating Evans Ashira when the WBA proclaimed Bernard Hopkins its so-called "super champion" in 2004.

Jermain Taylor usurped the legitimate title from Hopkins with back-to-back victories over the Philadelphian last year, and Sturm is keen to take him on. There is also the prospect of a bout later this year against fellow alphabet trinket holder Arthur Abraham, the Armenian who lives now in Berlin.

"Either of these fights I would like to make for Felix," confirmed promoter Peter Kohl. "I believe he will beat both. He is just too good for them."

Sturm, 159¾, Hamburg, Germany, was certainly too good for the veteran Masoe, 159¾, Auckland, New Zealand, via Western Samoa, whose reputation for being a powerful puncher was rendered worthless by Sturm's sharpshooting from range. He was able to dominate his 5'8" opponent with the same jab that almost cost De La Hoya his shot at Hopkins. In the opening couple of rounds, Sturm augmented his left-hand lead with hard left hooks, solid right uppercuts, and good lateral movement. Masoe was one-dimensional and unable to respond, apart from trying to land one of his heavy powershots—without much success.

But in the third he managed to tag Sturm's jaw with a strong left hook, and from then on Sturm, 27, was less inclined to mix it up, boxing almost exclusively on the outside and building up a clear points lead with his excellent jab. His task was made all the easier by Masoe's inability to bore in and apply any kind of pressure. The New Zealander was just too slow, Sturm handling him as he might a sparring partner, pumping the jab in his face at will.

The crowd, however, was not wholly satisfied, and in some sections Sturm was booed for an apparent reluctance to get involved in any punching exchanges, though this was clearly to his corner's liking, for, between rounds, trainer Michael Timm emphasized to him to keep Masoe at bay. Sturm's success, from range, with the overhand right and left hook failed to pacify those in the crowd who desired more of a slugfest. But Sturm was an emphatic winner nonetheless when the final bell was rung.

Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa) and Raul Caiz Jr. (USA) scored 117-111, and Gustavo Padilla (Panama) had it 115-113, all for Sturm. THE RING'S scorecard was 117-112, also for Sturm.

"Maselino was physically and mentally very strong, and I had to be smart and box tactically. I did land some hard punches, but Masoe would not give up," said a delighted Sturm, 25-1 (11).

A magnanimous Masoe, 26-3 (25), acknowledged that "Sturm is a tremendous fighter," but the German nevertheless has to wait for a shot at the winner of Taylor vs. Winky Wright if he wants to be regarded as a real champion.

Promoter: **Universum-Box**

(3-11-06)

Brian Doogan

Edison Miranda KO 7 Howard Eastman

Hollywood, Florida: Eastman's days as a middleweight contender came to an end at the flashing fists of Miranda, who dominated the faded Englishman throughout most of their scheduled 12-rounder at the Seminole Hard Rock Arena, before stopping him at the 2:33 mark of the seventh round. It was Eastman's third consecutive defeat, having dropped decisions to Bernard Hopkins, in a February 2005 middleweight title challenge, and Arthur Abraham in July '05; Miranda was the first to stop him.

Eastman, 159, who trained in his native Guyana instead of in the U.K. and only hooked up with regular trainer Rob McCracken less than a week before the fight, looked drained and every minute of his 35 years when he entered the ring. This was a marked contrast to the energetic Miranda, a muscular 159-pounder from Colombia who was having his fifth U.S. bout since moving his base of operation to Miami, Florida, last year.

Nothing much happened in the first three rounds as Eastman backed up and circled away from the stalking Miranda, who looked raw but powerful as he tried to get close enough to unload. Miranda, 25, increased the tempo of his advance in the fourth, but was hampered by meddlesome referee Brian Gary, who jumped at every minor infraction committed by Miranda while seemingly ignoring Eastman's.

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/RINGSIDEPICS.COM

Miranda slams a left into Eastman on his way to a stoppage victory

The reason for Eastman's reluctance to engage became clear in the fifth when Miranda rocked him with a booming right to the head. But, to his credit, Eastman fought back effectively in the sixth, twice wobbling Miranda with stiff rights of his own, once early in the round and then again near the bell.

Miranda, however, was undaunted and went right back on the attack in the seventh, barging forward and trapping Eastman in a corner, where he unloaded a heavy barrage of punches. Eastman did his best to dodge the incoming blows, but far too many of Miranda's haymakers were landing flush, snapping Eastman's head back and causing his body to sag. Despite Eastman's postfight objections, Gary's decision to stop the fight appeared well-timed.

The victory earned the hard-hitting Miranada, 26-0 (23), a spot in THE RING's middleweight rankings, where his crude but exciting style should add some spice. Eastman, 40-4 (35), will probably fight on, but is unlikely to work his way back into contention at this stage of his career.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Warrior's Boxing**
(3-24-06)

Isaac Hlatshwayo W 12 Nate Campbell

Tampa, Florida: So much for Campbell's comeback. Just six months after seemingly revitalizing his career with an upset victory over previously unbeaten Almazbek "Kid Diamond" Raiymkulov, the 34-year-old veteran from Jacksonville, Florida, found his way back into the loss column against RING-rated lightweight Hlatshwayo at the Florida State Fairgrounds. The South African brought an undefeated record into the ring and wouldn't relinquish it as easily as Kid Diamond did, using his outstanding jab to battle back from a sluggish start and win a decision that shouldn't have been as dramatic as the split scores made it.

For the first two rounds, Campbell, 135, was on point, zinging right hands to the body with authority, moving well, and lending credence to his claims that he'd been killing himself to make 130 pounds and had far greater effectiveness as a lightweight. A fraction of a second after the bell to end round two, Hlatshwayo, 135, landed a relatively harmless shot, and Campbell retaliated with a left hand, forcing referee Frank Santore (USA) to take charge and pull the fighters apart. From that point forward, Campbell's spunk would gradually decrease.

Hlatshwayo, 28, started doubling and tripling up his jab in the third, appearing to edge the round, and "The Angel" hardly had to do anything to take the fourth, as Campbell spent almost the entire round on his bicycle. The bout remained close and competitive for the next few rounds, but as Campbell's bodywork tapered off and Hlatshwayo's jab grew more consistent, the outcome came into clearer focus. By the ninth, the South African was winning rounds in one-sided fashion, unloading jabs and combinations with Campbell offering little to nothing in return.

The 10th was perhaps Hlatshwayo's best round, as he landed eight-punch, 10-punch, and 12-punch flurries without retaliation from "The Galaxxy Warrior." Having been told by his corner that he was behind, Campbell mustered up a more determined effort in the 12th and final round, but his punching was sloppy, and Hlatshwayo rallied in the second half of the round to earn the point. The Punch Track numbers told the story: Campbell had a huge edge in bodypunching, outlanding Hlatshwayo 176-40, but Hlatshwayo held an even more significant edge in punches to the head, throwing more than twice as many as Campbell and outlanding him 244-92.

While there were some close rounds, it seemed a clear-cut win for Hlatshwayo (THE RING scored it 117-112), even if the opponent had a home-state advantage. But the reading of the scorecards proved an adventure. Judge Mark Streisand (USA) had Campbell on top 115-113, negated by a 116-112 score for Campbell from judge Rich Green (USA). As he read the final score, ring announcer Mark Beiro said "and new ... " in reference to one of the silly minor alphabet trinkets at stake, confusing Campbell and leading him to drop to the canvas in celebration—only to learn that the 117-111 score from Peter Trematerra (USA) belonged to Hlatshwayo. You had to feel for Campbell, 28-5-1 (24), when he was told the bad news and his elation turned to disappointment, but justice was served, and Hlatshwayo, 25-0 (9), continued his quiet rise up the lightweight ranks.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoters: **One Punch Productions, Star Boxing**
(4-7-06)

Wladimir Sidorenko D 12 Ricardo Cordoba

Hamburg, Germany: The newspapers in Panama were unequivocal, a typical report in the following morning's dailies insisting that Cordoba, 118, San Miguelito, Panama, "was the victim of a worldwide hold-up." Another called the result "a cold water bucket," which is what the 23-year-old southpaw might have wished to splash over the eyes of the three ringside judges who deemed the efforts of Sidorenko, 118, Hamburg, Germany, via Energodar, Ukraine, worthy of a majority draw at the Color Line Arena. It was Sidorenko's second defense of the WBA bantamweight title that he won against Julio Zarate in February 2005.

The scorecards were certainly eccentric. Guy Jutras (Canada) and Ruben Garcia (USA) both scored 114-114, but Daniel Heel (France) somehow managed to make it 118-111 in favor of Sidorenko, a score that *really* angered the Panamanian camp. "It was a robbery," cried the commentators of Channel 4, the TV network that broadcast the bout in Panama. THE RING scored 115-113 in favor of Cordoba.

This was the second time for the man known as "El Maestrito" to be left with the abject feeling that he had been victimized, having lost a split decision to Thailand's Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym in August 2005 in Bangkok for the ever-important WBA interim belt at 118 pounds. He was confident, despite meeting Sidorenko in the Ukrainian's adopted home city, that his well-honed skills and superior firepower would prove too much for the 29-year-old titleholder, a former Olympic bronze medalist. But Sidorenko managed to utilize

his experience and work rate at crucial junctures to preserve his unbeaten record.

Sidorenko's strategy against the clever South American southpaw was to drive his right hand through the middle at every opportunity. But Cordoba forced the issue from the outset, attacking Sidorenko to the body and maintaining a strong assault that forced the Ukrainian on the defensive. His guard was tight at all times, and as the rounds progressed, it became clear that Cordoba could not sustain the pressure, allowing Sidorenko to seize the initiative the longer the fight went on.

Cordoba's confidence suffered too, as he began to realize that his prolonged bombardment had little or no effect on Sidorenko, so he tired, allowing the Ukrainian to crank up his effort in the later rounds. Still, it was the sternest test that Sidorenko, 18-0-1 (6), has ever endured, and, at the final bell, this was apparent from the look on his face. Minutes later, the look of complete bewilderment on the face of Cordoba told the real story. A rematch, he announced, was the least reward he should have for his effort, but Sidorenko is instead likely to face Poonsawat, the only man ever to beat Cordoba, 27-1-1 (18).

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Sidorenko looked very lucky to escape with a draw against Cordoba

Promoter: **Universum-Box**
(3-11-06)
Brian Doogan

Arturo Morua W 12 Emanuel Augustus

Tohono O'odham Nation, Arizona: Sometimes a fighter's reputation precedes him. That could have been the case for unfortunate Augustus when he dropped a close unanimous decision to Morua at the Desert Diamond Casino outside of Tucson.

Augustus, 138½, Brownsville, Texas, popular for his offbeat, sometimes zany antics, may not always have looked as intense as the well-focused Morua, 140, Guadalajara, Mexico, but that didn't mean Augustus was screwing around. Some reports made it seem like Augustus clowned away crucial moments. Not so. For the most part, Augustus followed a disciplined, pressure-based fight plan. He posed occasionally, high stutter-stepping after getting tagged a few times and flashing a few smiles to acknowledge shots that smacked his kisser. But aside from a handful of brief moments, Augustus fought hard all the way.

"I hate to sound like a sore loser, but a fighter can only take so much," Augustus said after the bout. "I'm always facing an uphill battle in underdog-type fights, and I've always accepted whatever it is I got. These opportunities keep passing me by, and now I'm almost depressed."

The scoring was highly debatable, but contrary to some postfight smoke signals, the result was no robbery. More traditionally inclined observers could understandably prefer the straight-up, stand-and-deliver style of Morua, who showed up in primo shape and shook off a pile of stinging combinations. Still, many witnesses felt the aggressive Augustus had good reason to feel upset. But most sessions in this 36-minute grinder were toss-up close. Morua landed the biggest shots. Augustus chugged forward against his taller foe and got in close much of the evening. An informal postfight poll gave a slight edge to Morua.

Morua appeared much larger, but the shorter Augustus worked the distance between them well and scored first. Morua landed overhand rights as Augustus advanced, and a pattern of give and take began. They traded big rights, but Morua showed patience and was mostly more effective. Morua turned his head to avoid impact in the middle frames, and kept his jab against Augustus' bloody lip. Morua was cut near his left eye, but it was never an issue.

Morua, 27, didn't outwork Augustus, 31, during the middle rounds, but he did outpunch him. By the 10th, Augustus pursued behind straight shots that carried a bit of desperation.

By the 11th frame, Morua's face was lumpy, and Augustus landed more shots as they mauled their way around the ring down the stretch. The assembled crowd of more than 1,600 screamed along to the finish line, and Augustus continued to rally. Referee Bobby Ferrara (USA) did a good job letting the fighters make their own way.

The official scoring all favored Morua by a considerable gap. Joe Garcia (USA) and Gerald Maltz (USA) agreed at 116-112, and Chris Wilson (USA) had it 117-111. All three have a solid local history of keen observation. THE RING saw it 116-112 for Augustus.

Morua, now 23-7-1 (13), added Augustus' pelt to a resume that includes solid wins over Jung Bum Kim, Carlos Maussa, and Omar Weis. "He was pressuring me, but he wasn't connecting hard," explained Morua, "I would fight him again, but now I want a bigger fight. This was an important step."

"I know I didn't win the fight hands down," said a dejected Augustus, 32-26-6 (17). "He can fight. I just don't believe he beat me. I've got all these demons on my back. Right now my career is a question mark to me. All I can do is keep working hard and try to achieve my dreams."

Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**

(3-10-06)

Phil Woolever

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Gibbs (left) overcame this and many other hard shots to stop Pierre in the final round

Willie Gibbs KO 12 Lenord Pierre

Ledyard, Connecticut: Gibbs is no Julio Cesar Chavez, and Pierre is no Meldrick Taylor, but it was hard not to be reminded of the legendary 1990 junior welterweight championship battle as once-beaten middleweight hopefuls Gibbs and Pierre created a thriller at Foxwoods Casino that ended with a dramatic and controversial come-from-behind stoppage with mere seconds remaining on the clock. It isn't often that a clubfight with no national television coverage is named Fight of the Year, but Gibbs-Pierre has to warrant consideration—and a rematch.

In a bout scheduled for 12 because a regional title was at stake, Gibbs, 158, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, asserted his power early, nearly starching Pierre, 159, Catskill, New York, via Haiti, in the opening round. "The Haitian Sensation" surely had flashbacks to his lone previous loss, a one-round kayo defeat to prospect John Duddy 51 weeks earlier, but this time he weathered the onslaught of "The Gladiator," made it into the second round, and quickly began doing damage of his own with a violent body attack. Pierre, 26, put suffocating pressure on the 30-year-old Gibbs, who himself had to be experiencing flashbacks to his sole defeat, a fourth-round kayo in a back-and-forth war with Daniel Edouard in '04. The 5'8" Pierre, giving away four inches to Gibbs, glued himself to his opponent's chest, never slowing down—even after suffering bad cuts over both eyes. Gibbs did his fair share of effective counterpunching, but he couldn't discourage Pierre.

After 11 rounds of nonstop action, Pierre needed only to stay on his feet throughout the 12th to win. Judge John Lawson (USA) had Gibbs up by a wide 107-102 score, but Glenn Feldman (USA) had Pierre ahead 106-104, and Robert Paolino (USA) had the Haitian up 106-103. Of course, Pierre and his trainer, Kevin Rooney, didn't know this, so Pierre went into round 12 looking for a knockout. And, for a moment, it looked like he might get it as he backed Gibbs against the ropes and pounded away. But, with only 10 seconds remaining, Gibbs landed a counter left hook, and Pierre was suddenly unsteady. Gibbs, 20-1 (16), seized the moment and landed another hook, dropping Pierre brutally. At 2:53 of the round, without issuing a count, referee Michael Ortega (USA) waved off the fight.

Rooney was irate, barking that Pierre was starting to get up and should have been given an opportunity to rise. A few minutes after the fight, Pierre, 18-2 (13), was still in a daze, having no recollection of how the bout ended.

Gibbs' promoter, Rich Cappiello, said afterward that he hoped to get The Gladiator a fight against Peter Manfredo. But every single fan in attendance at Foxwoods would probably tell you they'd rather see Gibbs-Pierre II first.

Promoter: **Northeast Promotions**

(3-10-06) ■

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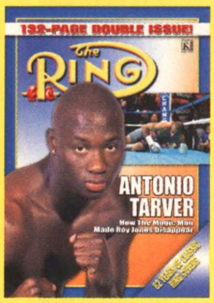

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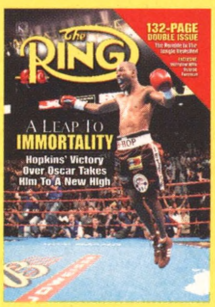

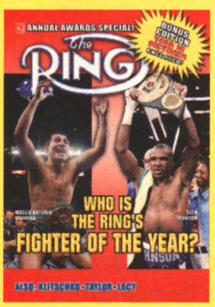

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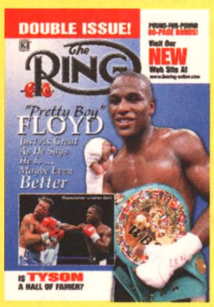

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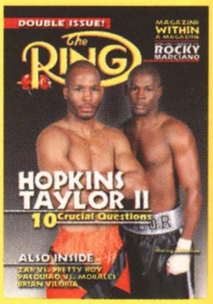

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(Continued from Page 24)

dropped off her one-month-old to a woman working one of the carnival stands.

No one knows whether the woman was a close friend or someone Miranda's mother had just met. Not even Miranda. But he does know what the next nine years brought: hell on earth. It was such an abusive environment that at nine Miranda felt compelled to run away, taking to the drug-infested streets of Cali, wandering around rummaging through trash bins to eat.

"Edison's mother was 14, and in her opinion, she felt she was being responsible to him, thinking someone was going to raise him better," said Steve Benbasat, Miranda's co-manager with Greg Wantman. "His mother thought he was going to be in better hands with this person. Edison spent nine years with this woman, physically and mentally abused. There was a lot of hollering and yelling and he was hit. He was on the street at nine years old."

He set out on a quest to find his biological mother, who was 23 by then and had a husband and a new life. Miranda made the 100-mile search for her.

At one stop, a construction site, Miranda asked around for his mother and wound up finding her brother, his blood uncle. As proof, Miranda had to show the man a two-inch long circular birthmark on his leg. His uncle took him to his mother. But her husband interceded, basically giving her an ultimatum: "Either him or me," her husband yelled, as young Miranda stood in the doorway watching this transpire.

So instead of being embraced by a mother he longed for, Miranda was rejected again. He was nine. On his own. With nowhere to go. Again.

It meant back to subsisting on dinner picked straight from the garbage or begging storeowners for leftovers.

"It's how I survived and it's just what I knew. Only God knows why I'm alive today," Miranda said through an interpreter. "There isn't a second that goes by that I don't thank God. I lived through the worst of the worst. I'd go days without eating. I lived through the thick and hard, which is always why I give thanks to God."

Miranda skirted danger for a year, until he decided to make the deadly trek from Medellin to Santa Rosa.

"I started walking and walking, and I remember it was real cold because of the high altitude, being up in the mountains," Miranda recalled. "I didn't have a coat. I was almost naked. I was this little kid in the middle of two cities and walking for about a day. I didn't have water and didn't have anything. I lived two days in that situation. My legs were swollen and I couldn't walk anymore.

"But I remember a man stopped in a truck and he scooped me up. I like to say that the man had to have been straight from God, because cars would pass by and they would shoot at anything. I've been through so many things in my life, but that was the worst of the worst. That was the lowest point of my life. I was always able to do things. I had no problems walking anywhere, or grabbing the back of a bus or a truck to take me somewhere. But when you just can't move forward anymore, help showed up just in time. I couldn't do it anymore. I had to urinate and drink it. That's how desperate times were for me then."

By the time he turned 12, Miranda was working odd construction jobs, while hustling loose change from street vendors. Miranda claims he didn't wear his first pair of shoes until he was 13, when he was for working in Colombian plantain fields. Miranda never received a formal education, yet he taught himself how to read, practicing on the Bible.

By 14, Miranda was working as a cattle butcher and at 15 he had this dream ... about boxing. What made this certain dream so interesting is that Miranda never saw a boxing match before or even wore a boxing glove.

He couldn't sleep that night, and the next morning went to the local boxing gym and told the coaches there that he wanted to be a fighter. At first, they laughed at the emaciated teenager. But he came back.

"Edison never knew anything about boxing, yet he had this dream that he was in a ring beating the hell out of someone," Benbasat said. "To Edison, this was like a message from God. He thought he was a mission from God. He had to fight; like fighting was something he was *supposed* to do."

As he grew into adolescence, other temptations arose. Prostitution, drugs, robbery all surrounded Miranda, who now began sleeping behind the gym. Corruption was everywhere, but Miranda, toting his Bible, repelled the advances.

It wasn't easy. A blossoming amateur career (he won 128 of 132 fights) quickly evolved into a burgeoning pro career, which fell early into the hands of the wrong people, according to Miranda.

"It got so bad that I even thought about taking my own life," he recalled. "For a few years there, when I was 22 to 24 years old, fighting in the Dominican Republic, I never thought I'd reach the United States. Inside of me, boxing always lived, but outside, everything looked like it was finished."

According to Miranda, a member of his Colombian management team threatened the fighter about his visa, allegedly saying to Miranda that his visa would be withheld unless Miranda killed a reporter.

"That was the condition," Miranda said. "I thought I was going to end up in prison." Instead, he ended up with Benbasat, Wantman, and Warrior's Boxing.

"I don't like talking too much about the past," Miranda said. "But the truth is, sometimes I do remember those things and I tell myself that the worst is over. Now I'm in the middle of the ring fighting, something I never even imagined. At the end of the day, I'm the star of the show. A star can't die."

Miranda carries the scars and memories to prove it. ■

From THE RING, January 1981

GENTLEMAN GERRY COONEY
Boxing's Big [6'6"] Question Mark

By Michael Katz

Granted, Gerry Cooney can punch holes in people. Yes, he lives up to his nickname of "Gentleman Gerry" and is a very nice fellow. Conceded, he is the man most likely to bring excitement to the heavyweight division.

And there are also unmistakable clues that he is a born fighter, a man who can take a punch. He is a sincere worker, someone who has worked hard in the gym to learn his trade and there are not many other boxers around today who can spin off the ropes going both to the right and left. He has learned his footwork as if he were a star pupil of Fred Astaire. Oh, there are many, many nice things one can write about Gerry Cooney ...

But really, Dennis Rappaport and Mike Jones, is this any way to develop a champion? Do you really think a fighter whose claim to fame is knockout victories over John "Dino" Denis, Jimmy Young, Ron Lyle, and scores of sparring partners is, at the age of 24, not that far removed from his gangling awkward teens, ready for the likes of Mike Weaver—let alone Larry Holmes?

Do you, the managers of Cooney, consider that parts of 86 rounds in an undefeated professional career of 24 victories over an assortment of opponents who could be found on any supermarket shelf next to the Hunt's and Del Monte cans prepares a fighter for a world championship?

Or, as Al Braverman, manager of the aforementioned Denis, once said: "I hope Cooney doesn't have his managers' guts. If they're that careful, they must be scared of something we don't know about. Perhaps he's got a potato for a chin."

Cooney has rarely been in the ring with someone who has even bothered to look in the direction of that chin, much less punch at it. In his latest fight, a one-round knockout of the 38-year-old Lyle, the old man splashed down without throwing a serious punch, never mind landing one. Cooney has never gone more than eight rounds and yet, some time soon, as the number-one contender of both the WBA and WBC, he will be getting a mandatory title shot.

And while Cooney has not proven he can NOT take a punch (the best evidence that he CAN came when he was

Was a diet of also-rans like Dino Denis, Jimmy Young, and Ron Lyle enough to build Gerry Cooney into a title contender? Mike Jones (left) and Dennis Rappaport (right), the managers of Cooney, thought it was. One rival manager questioned it, stating, "I hope Cooney doesn't have his managers' guts."

an amateur in 1976 battle with a Soviet champion who nailed him with a hard right in the opening round. Cooney, instead of blinking, reacted like a man whose mother had just been attacked and proceeded to destroy the Russian), he has shown some very serious weaknesses.

Of course, all his weaknesses can be erased with one swing of what must be considered the finest left hook in boxing, one that breaks ribs when aimed for the body (Lyle had one broken) and jaws when aimed for the head.

But his right hand is nowhere near as strong, the result mainly of an undeveloped shoulder muscle that was discovered only two years ago and subsequently strengthened by weightlifting exercises. He writes and eats with his left hand, but denies reports he is a converted southpaw, saying his father taught him to be ambidextrous.

He habitually drops his right hand when he throws his left hook, an open invitation to a counter hook. Often, he leaves his left jab drooping out in the cold, which would be all the excuse a pressuring fighter like Leon Spinks would need to get inside.

Under the training of Victor Valle, a 63-year-old former lightweight, Cooney has been working on these problems. His right hand is increasingly effective, but still doesn't have the one-punch capability of the left. The others are correctible weaknesses. But he has yet to be tested as to stamina or, that most elusive of qualities, guts.

We only have the words of Rappaport and Jones that Cooney does indeed have what it takes. Rappaport and Jones are a pair of Long Island realtors who have been in boxing less than five years, but who sometimes act as if they taught Ray Arcel and Freddie Brown how to tape a fighter's hands. And when it comes to Gerry Cooney, their opinions are more than slightly biased.

"I feel Gerry is ready for Weaver and I feel Gerry is ready for Holmes," said Jones. "The reason I feel that way is because I don't think either one of them is a great champion and I know what Gerry can do. I know Gerry has excellent stamina. He just hadn't had to show it. But it's much better than Holmes'. He went eight rounds with Animal Lopez and he wasn't even breathing hard at the end.

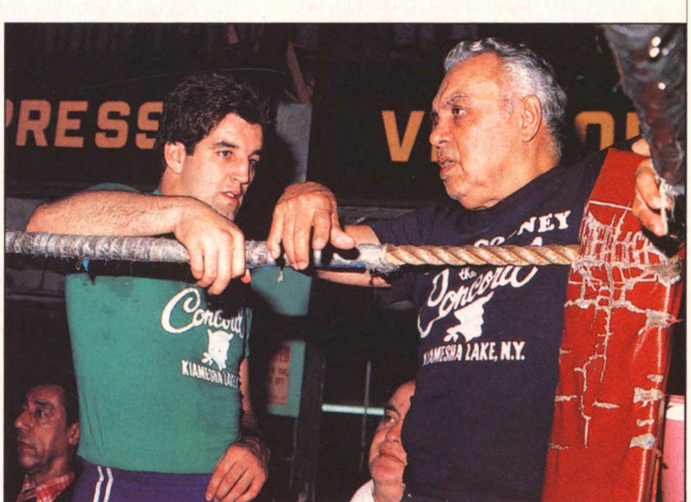
"We're damned if we do, damned if we don't," said Rappaport. "We're number one, and if we try and get Gerry a tough warm-up fight before the title and we lose, people will say, 'Look at those morons, they had a title fight and the kid's confidence was tremendous.' On the other hand, if we fight for the title straight away and lose, then it was because we didn't have a warm-up fight. The only way we can look good is if our fighter's hand is raised and he is the world champion. And we have the utmost confidence in Gerry. Under pressure, he responds best."

For his part, Cooney says only that he'll do whatever his managers decide. Weaver, Holmes, or warm-up bout, it makes no difference to him. He is a modest, well-disciplined son of a construction worker who was taught early the values of hard labor; a shy man who took acting lessons "to learn how to talk in front of people."

He towers over his opponents now, but his size was not always an advantage. "When I was 14, I was 6'1"," he says. "I grew too fast. My bones didn't have time to harden and I was knock-kneed. I was even going to go for an operation. I felt funny. I had complexes. I was skinny."

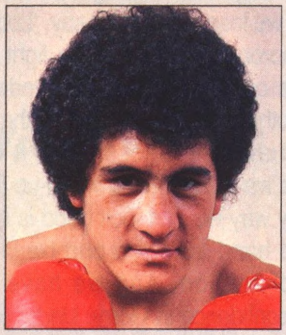
By the age of 16, at the time of his Golden Gloves debut, he was up to 6'4", but still a 160-pound middleweight. His father, Tony, a former fighter himself, wanted Gerry to be a fighter and the obedient son happily concurred.

"I love boxing," he says. "I always



Trainer Victor Valle, a 63-year-old former lightweight, almost had to teach Cooney professional boxing from scratch. Perhaps as importantly, he acted as Cooney's surrogate father, even going so far as to sing to his charge to keep him calm.

THE RING Ratings, January 1981



Salvador Sanchez

HEAVYWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Larry Holmes**, Easton, PA
1. Mike Weaver, Los Angeles, CA
2. Gerry Cooney, Huntington, NY
3. Leon Spinks, St. Louis, MO
4. Michael Dokes, Akron, OH
5. Gerrie Coetzee, South Africa
6. Marty Monroe, Los Angeles, CA
7. Trevor Berbick, Canada
8. Greg Page, Louisville, KY
9. Bernardo Mercado, Colombia
10. Leroy Jones, Denver, CO

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Matthew Saad Muhammad**, Philadelphia, PA
1. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, Brooklyn, NY
2. Michael Spinks, St. Louis, MO
3. James Scott, Rahway, NJ
4. Jerry Martin, Philadelphia, PA
5. Lotte Mwale, Zambia
6. Marvin Johnson, Indianapolis, IN
7. Marvin Camel, Missoula, MT
8. Alvaro (Yaqui) Lopez, Stockton, CA
9. Jesse Burnett, Los Angeles, CA
10. John Conteh, England

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Marvin Hagler**, Brockton, MA
1. Vito Antuefermo, Brooklyn, NY
2. Dwight Davison, Detroit, MI
3. Vito Antuefermo, Brooklyn, NY
4. Fulgencio Obel, Venezuela
5. Curtis Parker, Philadelphia, PA
6. Mustafa Hamsho, Syria
7. Ronnie Harris, Akron, OH
8. Wilford Scypion, Port Arthur, TX
9. Ruben Pardo, Argentina
10. Matteo Salvemini, Italy

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Ayub Kalule**, Denmark
1. Maurice Hope, England
2. Kenny Bristol, Guyana
3. Tony Chieverini, Kansas City, MO
4. Roger Leonard, Palmer Park, MD
5. Rocky Mattioli, Australia
6. Rocky Mosley, Las Vegas, NV
7. Carlos Herrera, Argentina
8. Tyrone Rackley, Phoenix, AZ
9. Walter Gomez, Argentina
10. Tidashi Mihara, Japan

WELTERWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Roberto Duran**, Panama
1. Thomas Hearns, Detroit, MI
2. Ray Leonard, Palmer Park, MD
3. Wilfred Benitez, Puerto Rico
4. Pipino Cuevas, Mexico
5. Randy Shields, N. Hollywood, CA
6. Pete Ranzany, Sacramento, CA
7. Adolfo Viruet, Hoboken, NJ
8. Jorgen Hansen, Denmark
9. Luis Primero, Venezuela
10. Greg Stephens, San Diego, CA

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Aaron Pryor**, Cincinnati, OH
1. Saoul Mamby, Brooklyn, NY
2. Jo Kimpuani, Zaire
3. Lennox Blackmoore, Guyana
4. Sang-Hyun Kim, Korea
5. Domingo Ayala, Puerto Rico
6. Miguel Montilla, Dominican Republic
7. Teo Ozuna, Dominican Republic
8. Sal Lopez, Sacramento, CA
9. Willie Rodriguez, Allentown, PA
10. Bruce Curry, Los Angeles, CA

LIGHTWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Vacant**
1. Hilmer Kenty, Detroit, MI
2. Aaron Pryor, Cincinnati, OH
3. Alexis Arguello, Nicaragua
4. Jim Watt, Scotland
5. Howard Davis Jr., Glen Cove, NY
6. Rodolto Gonzalez, Mexico
7. Sean O'Grady, Oklahoma City, OK
8. Vilomar Fernandez, Dominican Republic
9. Claude Noel, Trinidad
10. Ernesto Espana, Venezuela

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Yasutsune Uehara**, Japan
1. Rafael (Bazooka) Limon, Mexico
2. Samuel Serrano, Puerto Rico
3. Idelfonso Bethelmy, Venezuela
4. Roberto Elizondo, Corpus Christi, TX
5. Frankie Baltazar, Los Angeles, CA
6. Victor Echegaray, Argentina
7. Greg Coverson, Kalamazoo, MI
8. Oscar Arnal, Venezuela
9. Leonel Hernandez, Venezuela
10. Ruben Riani, Argentina

FEATHERWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Salvador Sanchez**, Mexico
1. Wilfredo Gomez, Puerto Rico
2. Eusebio Pedroza, Panama
3. Ruben Castillo, Bakersfield, CA
4. Rocky Lockridge, Paterson, NJ
5. Patrick Ford, Guyana
6. Juan Malvarez, Argentina
7. Roberto Castanon, Spain
8. Juan LaPorte, New York, NY
9. Luis Avila, Panama
10. Noel Arriespado, Honolulu, HI

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

World Champ: **Wilfredo Gomez**, Puerto Rico
1. Sergio Palma, Argentina
2. Ricardo Cardona, Colombia
3. Leo Cruz, Dominican Republic
4. Mike Ayala, NewYork, NY
5. Nicky Perez, Tucson, AZ
6. Soon-Hyun Chung, Korea
7. Carmelo Negron, New York, NY
8. Jose Caba, Dominican Republic
9. Jose Cervantes, Colombia
10. Carlos Mendoza, Panama

BANTAMWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Julian Solis**, Puerto Rico
1. Lupe Pintor, Mexico
2. Jorge Lujan, Panama
3. Alberto Davila, Los Angeles, CA
4. Jeff Chandler, Philadelphia, PA
5. Roberto Rubaldino, Mexico
6. Oscar Muniz, Los Angeles, CA
7. Rafael Orono, Venezuela
8. Jose R. Narvaez, Argentina
9. Eijiro Murata, Japan
10. Shuchi Isogami, Japan

FLYWEIGHTS

World Champ: **Shoji Oguma**, Japan
1. Yoko Gushiken, Japan
2. Tae-Shik Kim, Korea
3. Hilario Zapata, Panama
4. Guty Espadas, Mexico
5. Chan-Hee Park, Korea
6. Betulio Gonzalez, Venezuela
7. Luis Ibarra, Panama
8. Charlie Magri, England
9. Joey Olivo, Los Angeles, CA
10. Miguel Canto, Mexico

Cooney passed a good test in getting by veteran Jimmy Young, who by that time in his career was way past his prime. Young put on a competitive fight, until a cut stopped the fight in the third round.

wanted to be a fighter."

When he was 17, after graduating from Walt Whitman High School in Huntington, Long Island, Cooney went to work with his father at Local 40 of the Steelworkers Union. The Foley Square Courthouse in New York and the Yankee Stadium garage were partially built by Gerry Cooney. The construction work helped build Cooney's almost deceptive strength.

Tony Cooney also made sure Cooney got up early in the mornings to run and made sure he got to the gym on time. It paid off with a 55-2 amateur record, including the 1976 New York Golden Gloves heavyweight championship and an invitation from Col. Donald Hull to take part in the Olympic Trials. Two days after the invitation, Tony Cooney died of cancer.

"I didn't care about fighting, I had to stay with my family," says Cooney now. "After things got straightened out, I realized I couldn't collect unemployment and I started looking for ways of making money."

It was evident that boxing offered his best chance and he waited and listened to offers from many would-be managers before becoming set to fight for Cus D'Amato. Enter Rappaport and Jones, who had just signed Howard Davis, another Long Islander and the brightest star of the 1976 Olympic team.

Rappaport told Cooney that first he should meet Victor Valle and took the fighter to see the trainer. It was love at first sight. In 90 minutes, Cooney said, "I was completely won over."

Valle has become a second father to Cooney. Early in Gerry's pro career, he would even sing him to sleep. Whenever Gerry gets a little jumpy—like in the days right before a fight—Valle breaks into song, many of which he wrote himself. Number one on the Valle hit parade, to the tune of "Sonny Boy," starts like this:

"Come along with me, Gerry Boy.
"Come along with me, Gerry Boy.
"You were sent from heaven,
"You were sent from heaven,
"For me, Gerry Boy ..."

No matter how many times he's heard it, Cooney just beams when Valle breaks into song. He has an almost child-like adoration for Valle. The trainer treats him accordingly. "He had a lot to learn," said Valle. "He used to lift his legs up in the air, he was off-balance and his arms would fly over. He was too exposed. He had no defense and no knowledge of boxing. All he knew was that he had to hit you.

"I taught him punch-by-punch not just the offense of the punch, but how to defend against it. He's a thinking boxer now, and some day, if he wants, he's going to be a good trainer. He thinks before he places his punches. He doesn't waste them."

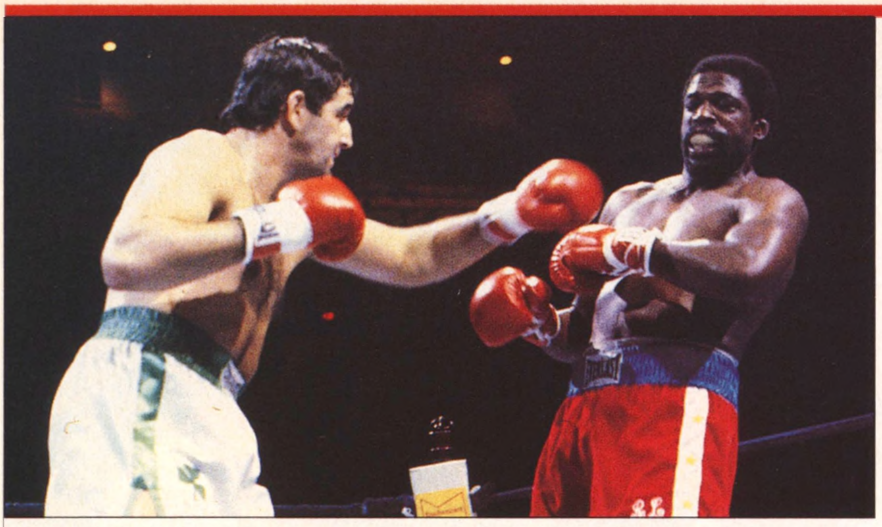
As with any slugger who counts 20 knockouts among his 24 victories, Cooney's prowess as a boxer is almost ignored. But the man can box.

He thinks like a boxer too. For example, he was very disappointed with how Gerrie Coetzee fought Weaver.

"I thought he looked terrible," Cooney said of the South African. "Coetzee did it all wrong. He just wasn't setting Mike Weaver up."

One can almost hear Victor Valle in Cooney's somewhat high-pitched voice. Listen! Valle is not worried about Cooney's right hand. The trainer thinks "right hands are overrated anyway."

"When you throw a right hand, you're off-balance, out of position, exposed," he said. "You can only throw it when you



The Ron Lyle fight proved that Cooney was a box-office hit in his home of Long Island, New York, a tepid area at best when it came to boxing. Still, Cooney drew close to 11,000 to watch his blowout of the former contender.

set it up. Too many fighters throw rights too often and that's why they get hit."

Cooney's lack of a right hand, however, has been noted by probable future opponents like Greg Page, the other bright new face in the heavyweight picture. Page watched Cooney stop Jimmy Young on cuts last May and was distinctly unimpressed.

"He's nothing," said Page. "Once you kill his left side, he's dead. And he was getting hit. He's easy to hit."

Young, in fact, had gone back to his corner after the opening round in that Atlantic City fight and told his trainer, George Benton, "After the next round, I think I've got him. No problem!"

In fact, he did most of the effective landing in the second round and seemingly was on his way to timing Cooney—putting his right hand up to block the left hook while at the same time throwing a left hook—when a Cooney barrage, set up nicely with a right hand, tore open Young's face in the third round. (Young claims it was a butt.) One of the punches in the barrage was a left uppercut, a particularly devastating blow not found in the repertoire of most fighters.

Still, for all of his obvious talent, doubts remain. No amount of Rappaport and Jones propaganda about sparring partners chased out of gyms (Cooney is a terrific gym fighter) can change the fact that Cooney has not yet beaten a real contender.

There were rave reviews for his November 1979 knockout of Denis—including some from Al Braverman, Denis' skeptical manager. But Denis was seen only eight months before a fat, old semi-retired partner for an exhibition tour given by another fat, old semi-retired fighter by the name of Muhammad Ali.

Young, who was in as good shape as he'd been in quite a while, had long since dropped out of the top 10, and he was putting up an interesting fight before the cut stopped him. After Young, Cooney has been strangely unbusy, dispatching Lyle last October with a body-punch. (Cooney set an unofficial record as an amateur for breaking the most ribs," said Dr. Ed Campbell, the chief physician of the New York State Athletic Commission.)

Cooney unjustly wore the tag "Great White Hope." It's a label Cooney did not like. "I don't want to be a green hope or a purple hope," he said. "Just a fighter."

Lyle was no fair test, although Rappaport swears that the veteran's handlers wanted to bet him $10,000 on the fight. (Rappaport said he offered them 2-1 odds, but that they took 3-1 elsewhere.) Lyle did not fight like a man who thought he had a chance, and exited through the ropes after a crunching left hook to the ribs. (One was broken, he later reported, and three others bruised.)

All that fight proved was that Cooney had indeed become a box-office attraction, at least on Long Island. Long Island, it must be remembered, has never supported boxing—George Foreman and Joe Frazier played to an almost-empty house at the same Nassau Coliseum where Cooney-Lyle drew almost 11,000 spectators—and the affluent, mostly white suburban community even failed to support Julius Erving when the Nets were one of pro basketball's most exciting teams. But for Cooney's fight, the Coliseum was plastered with posters, from the front doors to the men's rooms, proclaiming, "This is Cooney Country."

Cooney, in case you hadn't noticed, is white. And maybe, with Ronald Reagan as President, the Moral Majority would like to elect Cooney heavyweight champion of the world. But the fighter himself finds all mention of race in boxing "disgusting." He cringes when he hears that racist appellation "Great White Hope."

"I don't want to be a green hope or a purple hope," he says. "Just a fighter."

But in boxing, where promoters pander to the racism of the fans, white hopes who can fight are highly sought-after commodities. Rappaport will rarely let any conversation about Cooney go by without bringing it up, usually in the context that a "reverse discrimination" has worked against Cooney, that people see a white heavyweight and, through guilt by association, think of him as another Boone Kirkman. And that is probably at least partially true in the case of Cooney, who turned pro February 15, 1977, less than three months before Ken Norton shattered the myth of another

THE RING, January 1981

The Cover: Gerry Cooney was rapidly rising up the heavyweight ranks. But questions lingered: Was his good fortune based more on his pigment and the clever matchmaking or managers Dennis Rappaport and Mike Jones, or was "Gentleman Gerry" and his devastating left hook good enough to challenge heavyweight champion Larry Holmes?

Ten Greatest Fights Ever: THE RING took a poll of boxing experts in compiling a list of the greatest fights in the history of the game. Topping the list was the first Joe Louis-Billy Conn fight. Two of the three Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier fights were included among the top 10, with Frazier-Ali I finishing third and Ali-Frazier III placing seventh. The highest-placing recent fight was Roberto Duran-Ray Leonard I (1980), which was ranked 12th.

Boxing Father And Sons: Howard Davis Jr.'s relationship with his father, Howard Sr., came under fire after the Olympic gold medalist lost to WBC lightweight titlist Jim Watt. The criticism was that father-son tandems don't work, because fathers tend to be too cautious.

The Other Baer: THE RING caught up with Buddy Baer, not as well-known as his older brother, Max, living a comfortable life working as the Sergeant of Arms in the California State Senate. In his mid-60s and weighing close to 300 pounds, Baer's one wish was to be 27 again, so he could compete against the heavyweights of the early-1980s.

Fighter Of The Month: Mike Weaver garnered the honors for the second time in a seven-month span, defending the WBA heavyweight title against South African Gerrie Coetzee. Weaver scored a 13th-round knockout after surviving a scare in the eighth. Seven months earlier, Weaver was behind on all three scorecards when he took the WBA title by knocking out John Tate in the 15th round.

Great White Hope, Duane Bobick, with a first-round knockout.

Cooney gets disgusting letters advising him that he is the defender of the race. He really is a teddy bear of a man who loves his nickname, "Gentleman Gerry." One of his favorite movies is Raoul Walsh's classic *Gentleman Jim*, where Errol Flynn plays Gentleman Jim Corbett.

"In my life, my stay is not too long and I'm dead a long time," said Cooney. "I figure if I can make a few people happy, I'm doing all right, like talking to old people. Lots of old people, they have nobody to talk to and so much to say. If I can help them out and listen for a half-hour, I feel great. I don't know how far I'm going. If it turns out that way, that I'm a champion, great. But life doesn't always turn out that way. I want to try and be a realist."

Realism means that Gentleman Gerry does not like everybody. He was unhappy with members of the press earlier in his career ("How would you like to wake up in the morning and read that you're a bum?"). Now his pet dislike is Larry Holmes.

Cooney has nice things to say about Mike Weaver. "He's strong, he tends to hold back in the first few rounds and then attack," he said. "And he's a good puncher and takes a pretty good punch."

But, he says flatly, "I don't like Larry Holmes." Rappaport and Jones agree that the game plan, the ideal game plan, would be for them to knock off Weaver and then, with the WBA title—as well as star billing for what would be a bigger fight than all the Duran-Leonards put together—go after Holmes. They do not want to go after Holmes first if it means a 75-25 split with the champion.

"Let me tell you something," said Cooney, "if I were to fight Holmes, it would be 75-25 for me. I think he's lowrent. He talks a lot of crap. It's just the way he comes on, the way he talked about Scott LeDoux and Scott's poor wife, the way he handled the Ali fight. He should have asked the referee to stop it."

Cooney has been annoyed by Holmes' constant replies to questions about Cooney. "Who?" goes the champ when Cooney's name is mentioned. But privately, Holmes has been quite impressed with Cooney and realizes that the youngster offers him a chance for his biggest-ever purse. Holmes was at ringside for the Young fight, and although it lasted only a few rounds, he told a friend that Cooney's stamina was worthy of the championship distance. After the first round, Holmes turned to Bob Halloran of Caesars World and "doubted whether the kid can keep this pace up." By the fourth round, though, Holmes was convinced "this kid is in great shape because every punch he's throwing is a home-run punch and he's still throwing them."

It's obvious the Gentleman is no tramp. Cooney knows his father would be pleased.

"I think about him up there," he said. "I think he knows what's going on. I can see him going to work and telling all the guys he worked with in Local 40 about Gerry Cooney. And that would make him proud." ■

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Boxing And Mixed Martial Arts: A Safety Comparison

You would have to be blind to not see the growing popularity of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). Once banned from television as a "no holds barred" endeavor, it is now successfully regulated in many boxing states such as New Jersey, California, and Nevada. Large venues frequently sell out and television shows, such as *The Ultimate Fighter*, have millions of viewers. I am frequently asked about the medical differences between boxing and MMA, and oddly enough, hardcore boxing people frequently look at MMA bouts as too violent. It is worthwhile to compare both and understand MMA techniques, rules, and safety issues. Then you can make the call as to which is the most dangerous.

Mixed Martial Arts was originally designed to pit various fighting styles, including different types of wrestling, Brazilian jiujutsu, and Japanese shoot wrestling, against one another to see which would prevail.

To be a successful competitor in MMA, the athlete has to be adept in three phases of fighting: stand-up, clinch, and ground. An MMA fighter usually masters one particular fighting style. For example, a *sprawl-and-brawl* style is usually used by boxers, kickboxers, and/or Muay Thai fighters as a stand-up fighting technique to avoid being taken down. And if taken to the ground, they can tie up their opponents to survive and get back to a standing position. *Clinch-and-pound* is a grabbing technique used to prevent the opponent from moving away, so that the aggressor can use knees, stomps, and boxing techniques. *Ground-and-pound* consists of taking the opponent to the ground using a takedown or throw, obtaining a dominant position, and striking. *Submission wrestling* refers to taking the opponent to the ground, obtaining a position of dominance, and putting them in a submission hold to force a "tap out." There are three judges using the 10-point must system should an MMA bout last the distance.

As in boxing, rules were adapted for the safety of the fighter. MMA has weight classes, no headgear, no protective cups, and they wear five-ounce gloves with open fingers. Non-championship bouts are three rounds, while championship bouts are five rounds. Each round is five minutes long, with a one-minute rest period between rounds. Fouls are similar to those in boxing—rabbit punches, kidney punches, attacks to the groin—but also include also include fish-hooking, hair pulling, eye gouging, manipulation of the fingers or toes, or purposely holding the ring or cage.

If an MMA fighter suffers a cut or injury during the round, the referee stops the action, brings the fighter to the ringside physician, and if allowed to continue, the referee then places the fighters back in the same position, either upright or on the ground, so an advantage would not be lost.

Some rules vary from organization to organization, as does the combat zone. Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) uses an octagon-shaped rubber coated chain linked fence, while Pride uses a ring. According to UFC co-owner Lorenzo Fertitta, "The Octagon" or cage has no top enclosure or locks. It appears ominous, but actually protects the fighters. When a fighter is taken to the ground, it prevents them from falling out of the ring. A fighter on the ground can walk up the cage to a standing position to get leverage against his opponent, and it can also protect a fighter so his opponent cannot have room to apply a submission.

PHOTO BY JUNG YEON-JE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kim Jung Hyun kicks Shin Seung Ho during a Mixed Martial Arts competition in Seoul, South Korea. Like traditional boxers, MMA fighters compete in different weight divisions. Unlike boxers, they use open-fingers gloves.

Although there have been no reported deaths in MMA, the jury is really still out regarding whether or not it will be proven safer than boxing. So far, most of the injuries are orthopedic (broken hands, injuries to joints, elbows, shoulders, feet), and lacerations. The knockouts tend to be quick.

According to former ring physician Dr. Flip Homansky, "Historically, MMA is safer because the primary goal to win by takedowns and overpowering your opponent by submission, and not by head blows."

There is a huge difference between boxing and MMA when it comes to submitting. If a boxer quits on the stool, fans consider it unmanly and boo. In MMA, when a fighter is outclassed, he can tap out, which means he taps the ground or his opponent three times, or makes a verbal announcement.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Zuri Lawrence absorbs a right from Calvin Brock en route to a sixth-round knockout loss. Boxers take more head blows than MMA fighters, which obviously makes them more susceptible to brain injuries.

"The tap out is not a sign of weakness, but enables the fighter to safely come back another day," said Dr. Homansky. "Submission is an honorable way to admit defeat. In boxing, this is considered a sin. This needs to change."

In contrast to boxers, who start competing in their early-teens, MMA athletes typically begin their careerd as college wrestlers.

Respected MMA referee John McCarthy believes that the key to less danger in MMA relates to options.

"When a boxer is in trouble he can try to block punches while often absorbing more punishment," said McCarthy. "Moreover, MMA fighters have more options to win, including holding and takedowns."

In both sports, a referee will stop the contest as soon as a fighter becomes unconscious. Technical knockouts occur via a referee stoppage, physician recommending stoppage, or the corner stopping the bout. In MMA bouts, however, the referee will immediately stop the fight if the fighter is unable to defend himself from an attack, a chokehold, or if the fighter looks to have a significant injury such as a laceration, dislocation, or broken bone. If a fighter is dazed, or remains on the ground after a knockdown, there is no eight-count; the fight is over.

The MMA gloves have the fingers free for grappling, but they tend to offer much less protection to the hand. Due to this, you don't tend to see MMA fighters deliver continuous head blows. If they did, they would break their hands hitting someone's jaw or skull.

Non-MMA experts tend to comment on the apparent brutality of one fighter dominating the other on the ground while delivering punches. But a punch thrown while on the ground is significantly less harmful than when standing and using your body weight and hip rotation. The MMA referees position themselves over fighters on the ground to get a close look at their alertness, to recognize a submission, and move the dominating fighter away when needed.

Cuts tend to be more severe in MMA, as they not only result from punches, but from forearms and knees. They are also more of a challenge to the cutman, who has the one-minute rest between rounds to work on the cut with the same things used in boxing (Adrenaline 1/100, Avetine, Thrombin), but the very nature of grappling and the five-minute round increases the frequency of stoppages due to lacerations.

When first regulated, MMA had problems upholding suspensions. Many MMA athletes fought for different organizations using different disciplines, which complicated follow-up. No commission wants a fighter to fight too often, especially after a potentially serious injury. Now, we utilize *Fightfax* to track MMA fighters.

MMA fighters undergo the same prefight medical tests as boxers. Unfortunately, in Nevada's short history of steroid testing, the majority of the athletes testing positive have been MMA fighters. Dr. Homansky, who pushed for steroid testing in Nevada, believes that MMA fighters simply use the drugs more frequently.

Nothing will ever replace our respect and admiration for boxing, but MMA is a wonderful sport and the athletes are highly trained. You can't help but admire their dedication and perseverance. It is my hope that boxing fans will understand the inherent dangers of both sports, but appreciate the clear athleticism and courage it takes to compete in each.

Most importantly, boxing purists need to learn a lesson from MMA in appreciating the need to be more accepting when a boxer has had enough in the ring or his corner calls it quits. There is no shame in that, and the act can be in of itself courageous, represent good sportsmanship, and enable us to see the athlete in competition again. ■

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Horrible Heavyweights

How does the Hasim Rahman-James Toney fight end in a draw? I saw the fight for Rahman, 116-112. Besides, Toney is nothing but a fat, lazy pig.

NORM HAWLEY
hawley69@sympatico.ca

The heavyweight title fight between Rahman and Toney was the worst title fight I have watched in 45 years. In fact, my wife and I can fight better than they did. I feel Rahman and Toney have seen better days and retirement should be their next move.

GARY EDLER
Sutherlin, OR

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Joe Calzaghe's one-sided victory over Jeff Lacy earned the Welshman THE RING's super middleweight belt. Reader Paul Minnis wanted to know the reasoning behind the magazine's decision to recognize the bout as being for the vacant 168-pound title.

Pleasing Punchout

Anyone who didn't see the Sergei Liakhovich-Lamon Brewster fight missed a really good one. Finally, we saw heavyweights who will punch each other—and punch each other hard. What a heart Brewster has and what a granite chin on Liakhovich. The fight was in Cleveland, only a half-hour from me, and I wish I would have known about it earlier; I would have bought tickets. Showtime continues to be the best boxing network.

J.J. GUERRIERI
Cleveland, OH

Miranda Beats Eastman ... And Ref!

Edison Miranda would not quit in his bout with Howard Eastman, even though referee Brian Gary kept trying to throw him off-track. I was so upset at the way the ref just picked on the Colombian fighter and not Eastman. Every warning was to Miranda, but Eastman also held and hit at times.

I am sick and tired of these unfair refs who tend to pick on one fighter throughout a fight. I'm surprised Gary finally stepped in between and waved the fight over, awarding Miranda a TKO victory. I thought he would give Eastman a second chance by giving him an eight-count. But I guess Gary knew that if a few more punches landed, Eastman would have been in serious trouble

IVAN MONTIEL
Toronto, Ontario

Championship Explanation

THE RING has thousands of loyal fans who support your effort to clean up boxing, but we need to understand every aspect of your decisions so we can go to bat for you when talking to other fans. Therefore, I'd like to know what the circumstances were that led to THE RING's decision to recognize the bout between your number-one rated super middleweight contender, Joe Calzaghe, and

your number-three contender, Jeff Lacy, instead of waiting for a bout between Calzaghe and Mikkell Kessler, your number-two contender.

PAUL MINNIS
pminnis@therepublic.com

[Editor's Note: When deciding whether or not to recognize a bout between the number-one and number-three contenders for a vacant world title, THE RING carefully compares the records of number two and number three. If there were a significant difference in the accomplishments of the pair, we would not recognize a bout between number one and number three as being for the vacant title. In this case, however, we felt Kessler and Lacy were close enough to recognize the winner of Calzaghe-Lacy as the new super middleweight champion.]

Where's Spinks?

A friend and I were wondering what has happened to Cory Spinks. When we looked at THE RING rankings, Spinks was still listed (and fairly high), but when we looked at boxrec.com, it lists a kayo loss to Zab Judah in February 2005 as his last fight. As this fight happened more than a year ago, we were wondering why Spinks was still ranked in the top 10.

DAVID THOMPSON
Windsor, IL

[Editor's note: Spinks has now been dropped from THE RING ratings due to inactivity.]

Mayweather-Judah Fallout

I just saw the Floyd Mayweather-Zab Judah fight and was sickened at Judah's behavior. Okay, so he didn't throw a stool in the air and didn't choke the referee this time, but he sure tried his best to castrate poor Floyd. The follow-up blow to the back of Mayweather's unprotected head was also meant to do some serious damage.

Roger Mayweather blew it as well by jumping into the ring, but although the HBO broadcasters mentioned that Roger choked Judah, they failed to mention that Thug Zab threw a haymaker behind the head of one of Mayweather's corner guys first. Mark my words, Judah is going to end up biting someone's ear off or doing something terribly damaging to further taint boxing's image.

I was never a Floyd fan, but I can't help but respect the man. He kept his cool, initiated touching gloves after the melee, and then proceeded to outclass Judah. Great job, Floyd. You are all class.

ALEX CALDERON
dezalvic@aol.com

Isn't it time to ban Zab Judah from the sport? He is another version of Mike Tyson, without the financial upside. From the incident with Kostya Tszyu to not training seriously for most of his fights, all the way up to the Mayweather debacle—the guy is a first-class jerk, and a train wreck just waiting to happen. It's already kind of late, but let's not make the same mistakes that were made with Tyson. Get this joker out of the game before someone gets hurt badly.

RUSS BAKICH
rbakich@shaw.ca

After watching Floyd Mayweather beat Zab Judah, I think Mayweather has not only proven he could be the greatest fighter of our era, but that he's also the best-conditioned fighter, the best defensive fighter, and he has the highest boxing IQ. Put all of that together with superior speed and reflexes, and you could have the greatest boxer of all-time (though my father would argue for Ray Robinson).

Mayweather should fight Carlos Baldomir, Oscar De La Hoya, and Ricky Hatton and become the biggest draw on pay-per-view. And THE RING should be lauding him for all his greatness, instead of waiting for his downfall, like Roy Jones.

SEAN GOODMAN
Syracuse, NY

The PPV showdown between Floyd Mayweather and Zab Judah was supposed to feature two of the most athletic and fastest men in the sport of boxing today. Unfortunately, we were given a very mediocre fight without much excitement. The best part of the fight was, of course, the brawl that broke out in the 10th round, which was pretty hilarious.

AMOS REYNA0
Crosbyton, TX ■

PHOTO BY CHRIS POLK/HBO

Referee Richard Steele grabs Zab Judah immediately after Judah hobbled Floyd Mayweather with a low blow and a rabbit punch. The fight and its 10th-round brawl generated more letters and e-mails than any other topic this issue.

By Joe Santoliquito

Brock's Hoping To Crack The Bloc

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Brock to face undefeated Ibragimov on HBO

Holy Ivan Drago, the heavyweight division is turning into the Eastern Bloc of nations. When **Calvin Brock** looks around him, all he sees is red—Russian red. There's WBA titlist **Nikolay Valuev**, a true Russian, and WBO strapholder **Serguei Lyakhovich** and IBF beltholder **Wladimir Klitschko**, both from former Soviet satellite states. All of them are ranked among THE RING's top 10 heavyweights.

If that's not enough, Brock, a former 2000 United States Olympian, will be facing **Timor Ibragimov**, from the former Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan, on June 24, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Brock-Ibragimov will be shown on HBO's *Boxing After Dark*.

The heavyweight division has spawned a number of different movements over the years, with the most prominent being the search for the "Great White Hope" during Jack Johnson's reign as the first black heavyweight champion. Today, with so many Eastern Europeans populating the jumbled heavyweight landscape, the hue and cry might be for "The Great American Heavyweight."

"These Russians can fight. Look at what Lyakhovich did to **Lamon Brewster**, and Timor is a tough guy too," said Brock, 28-0 (22). "But overall, you hear people talking about the heavyweight division today and how bad it is. I think that the division is stacked with talent. I really think so. We have boxers at the top of the division that are better than people are giving them credit for. I will say, however, that there definitely aren't people in the division that people want to see. That left when guys like **Mike Tyson** and **Evander Holyfield** left. They are the one who set the stage. **Lennox Lewis** didn't excite people. When I go out there, I'm going out there to take my opponents out. That's the mentality that I have. Those are the instincts that I have."

Brock, who at 6'1" and 222 pounds is considered small by today's heavyweight standards, is looking to impress the HBO viewers, much like he did an ESPN pay-per-view audience when he scored a 10-round unanimous decision over the hulking **Jameel McCline**, in April 2005.

After Klitschko dismantled **Chris Byrd** in seven rounds for the IBF title, the focus of the division is much clearer. The grand scheme for Team Brock is to stop Ibragimov, 21-0-1 (13), then take on a less-challenging opponent, before fighting Klitschko.

"The first thing I need to do is gain more fans, and I'm on HBO, which is the perfect outlet to do it," Brock said. "People are tuning in to watch me, not Timor. The plan is for Main Events, my promoter, and HBO, to take another competitive fight, then go for a title. It doesn't matter who it's against. The bottom line is that I need to get on HBO to build a fanbase. The problem is that there still isn't any one guy to shoot for. I'm going to make myself that person."

Listen Up

Spicing up that HBO June 24 show will be **Joel Julio**, 27-0 (24), the highly touted Colombian junior middleweight. Julio may be in with the toughest match of his career, facing undefeated **Carlos Quintana**, 22-0 (18). Julio has stopped his last 11 opponents, while Quintana is a southpaw with some pop ... Mexican welterweight **Francisco Bojado** will be making a return to the ring on June 24, against an opponent to the determined after this magazine went to press. The hand-picked opponent probably won't pose much of a threat, since Bojado, once considered a top prospect, hasn't fought since July 24, 2004, when veteran **Jesse James Leija** handed him a split-decision defeat ... There was talk of a third **Manny Pacquiao-Erik Morales** fight set for September, at UNLV's Sam Boyd Stadium in Las Vegas, but "Pac-Man" has to first get by **Oscar Larios** in a hometown fight for the Filipino icon at the Araneta Coliseum, in Quezon City, on July 2. ■

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Julio might get a test from Quintana

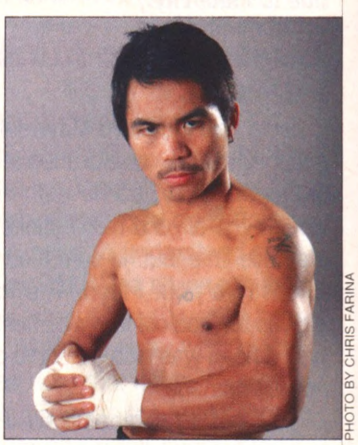
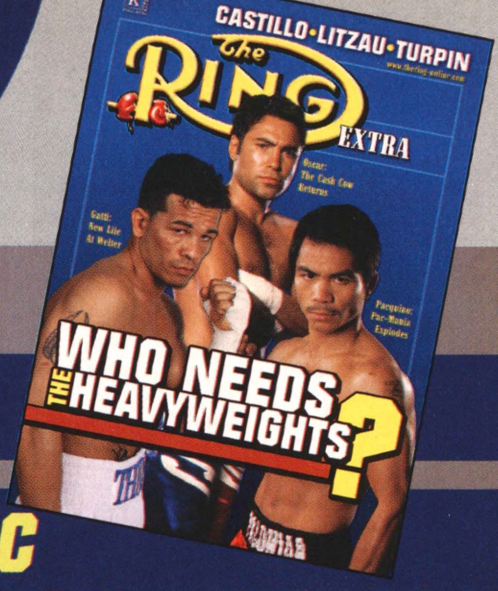


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Pacquiao has to get past Larios before having rubber match with Morales

The RING



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